





# Manuscript Writing

Exito! Alumni Webinar  
November 7, 2018  
Katherine Isokawa, Ph.D.



## *Webinar goal*

To **demystify** the process of submitting articles to academic journals.

To **empower** writers by offering solutions to common writing & revision obstacles.

## Preview

Gathering Ideas

Choosing a Journal

Drafting Your Article

A Look Inside the Review Process

Revising & Resubmitting

Q&A



How do I propose an article?

# Gathering ideas for articles

- *From your colleagues and teachers:*
  - Early on, accept your PI's guidance about what questions to pursue. Watching how your PI formulates and researches hypotheses is part of your training.
- *From your reading:*
  - What journals are folks in your research group reading? What journals is your coursework reading from?
  - Read to understand what others have said **and** to pique your curiosity and generate your own questions or hypotheses.
  - Keep a log of your responses to track your own intellectual growth.

# Proposed paper form (1 of 2)

Thanks to Dr. Danny Hughes for letting me share the iteration of the Proposed Paper Form he uses.

You do not need to use this exact form. But when you're getting started it can be very useful to have all this information in one place.

PERSON MAKING PROPOSAL: Danny Hughes      DATE: 06/24/2015

## PROPOSED PAPER

### PROPOSED TITLE OF STUDY:

Physical activity and physical functioning of Mexican-American promotoras engaged in promoting physical activity.

### WORKING TITLE OF PAPER:

Promotoras' physical activity.

### WRITING CHAIR AND SUGGESTED AUTHORSHIP ORDER:

1<sup>st</sup> Daniel Hughes  
2<sup>nd</sup> Augusto Rodriguez  
3<sup>rd</sup> Alexis Ortiz  
4<sup>th</sup> Mario Gill or Savannah  
5<sup>th</sup> Patricia Sharpe  
6<sup>th</sup> Laura Treviño  
Last Dr. Parra Medina

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

K22 CA154626  
REDES  
CTRC  
NHLBI – R01  
Colonias Program.

### POTENTIAL JOURNALS:

Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health

# Proposed paper form (2 of 2)

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. What are the characteristics of the promotoras re: anthropometrics, physical functioning self-reported PA & accelerometry, energy intake (i.e. energy balance – have ATG & FFQ data).
2. How do the characteristics of (anthropometrics, physical functioning, self-reported PA of the promotoras compare to aged, ethnicity matched Mexican-American women in the Rio Grande Valley.
3. How do the ATG, self-reported activity, non-exercise test & physical functioning compare i.e. – is the non-exercise a practical too.

## **DATA NEEDED FOR PAPER:**

1. Complete in SPSS ready to be analyzed.

## **ANALYSIS TO BE CONDUCTED:**

1. Descriptive stats (anthropometrics, physical functioning, PA & accelerometry data
2. Linear regression of ATG activity. (predictors: Anthropometrics, physical functioning, self-reported PA, n/x test, energy intake.
3. Correlation analyses – n/x test with activity and/or with physical functioning.

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## **OTHER NEEDS/ ISSUES/THOUGHTS:**

We have FFQ data in detail need to define what items should we use here (maybe total Kcal) – also which to use – face:face or phone.

## **FEEDBACK FROM DEB:**

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How do I choose which journal  
to submit my article to?  
(An even better question might  
be: **when** do I choose?)

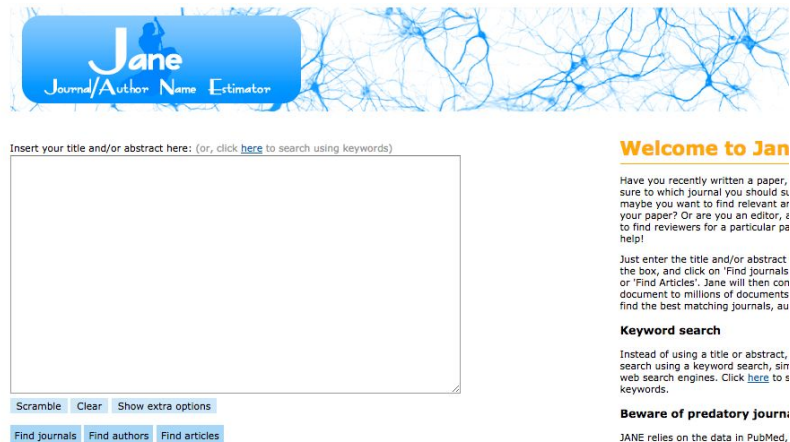


# Try the Journal/Author Name Estimator

<http://jane.biosemantics.org/>

You can plug your article abstract or prospective article title into JANE.

It will search PubMed to find the best matching journals, authors, or articles.



**Jane**  
Journal/Author Name Estimator

Insert your title and/or abstract here: (or, click [here](#) to search using keywords)

Scramble Clear Show extra options

Find journals Find authors Find articles

### Welcome to Jan

Have you recently written a paper, sure to which journal you should submit, maybe you want to find relevant articles for your paper? Or are you an editor, trying to find reviewers for a particular paper? Help!

Just enter the title and/or abstract in the box, and click on 'Find Journals' or 'Find Articles'. Jane will then connect your document to millions of documents and find the best matching journals, authors, or articles.

#### Keyword search

Instead of using a title or abstract, search using a keyword search, using our web search engines. Click [here](#) to see keywords.

#### Beware of predatory journals

JANE relies on the data in PubMed, which contains papers from predatory journals, therefore these journals can appear in the results. To help identify high-quality journals, we tag journals that are currently in MEDLINE, and open access journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals.

# Have journals in mind as you start writing (but submit to just one at a time)

Recommended reading: [“Five Clues to Finding the Right Journal”](#) (Dr. Pat Thomson, The University of Nottingham)

Key recommendation: “Look at the **topics, titles and abstracts** of issues of the journal for the last two to four years. What topics do they address? Do there seem to be particular angles that they take? Try to see any patterns that might be important. **See the journal as data and bring an analytic headset to the task.** Can you discern any particular lexicon or particular epistemologies used? What type of research is most common? What kinds of literatures are cited most often?”

# Test the waters with your abstract

- Writing an abstract makes you focus your own thinking.
- Recommended reading: “[How to get published in a journal: top tips from editors](#)”
- Key recommendation: “If someone asked you on the bus to quickly explain your paper, could you do so in clear, everyday language? **This clear argument should appear in your abstract and in the very first paragraph (even the first line) of your paper.** Don’t make us hunt for your argument.” Dr. Fiona Macaulay, *Journal of Latin American Studies*

# Test the waters with your abstract

Corresponding with the journal editor in advance saves everybody valuable time.

In your correspondence, demonstrate that you are familiar with the type of scholarship that appears in the journal.





What resources can I draw on  
as I draft my article?

# Be aware of your strengths/struggles as a writer before you begin.

- No matter what you're writing, your tasks will be the same:
  - contextualizing your research
  - explaining the importance of your questions
  - justifying your methods
  - offering your results
  - stating the importance of your results
- Which of these five is the hardest for you?
  - *Writer KD*
  - *Writer DN*

# Learning from writing mentors in your research group

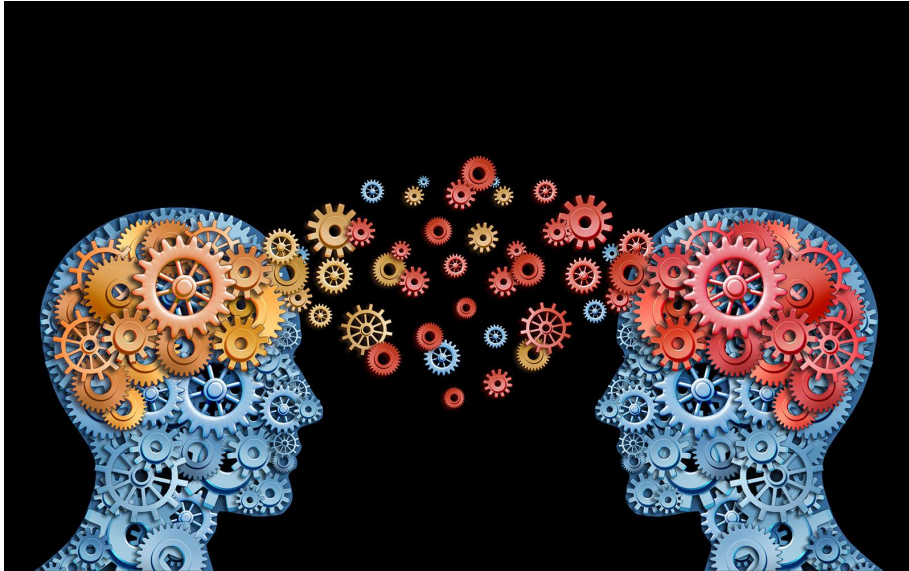
- You will learn something from the way senior grad students, post-docs, and your PI go about the writing process, even if it is not the way you might want to go about it.
  - *Writer CD*
  - *Writer GA*
- You **MUST** have others- obviously co-authors & mentors, but perhaps even people outside your field - read your work beforehand.
- And every revision you have to make before submission may save you one after.



What happens after  
I submit my article?



# The Review Process



## **Reviewers are experts in your field**

They read the abstract (and may skim the article) to decide whether to accept the review request. They may ask for help in reviewing sections beyond their expertise.

## **Reviewers are working for free**

So you know they really care! And may have a tight deadline- 2-3 weeks, maybe.

# The Review Process

## 2-4 reviewers per article; 3 is average

A round of reviews (reviewers, editor reads reviewers' reports & makes their own decision) **may take 2-4 months.**

Some articles require **multiple rounds of reviews** before a final decision is rendered.

## Possible responses from your reviewers

- Reject (tinker w the article, tailor it to a new journal- then send it back out).
- Accept (unicorn!)
- Accept with minor changes.
- **Revise & resubmit.**

**Manuscript Review** HHCI-17-0009**General Comments:**

Overall very enthusiastic about this paper. I like the importance of focusing on one of the most important issues for us Hispanics, childhood obesity and the importance of aligning family, health care provider in education for the parent-family. I commend the authors for focusing the spotlight on this important issue. I also like the tool chosen and the approach chosen. My enthusiasm is dampened by several items including some details missing in the methodology, the way figures are used to illustrate the results and in my opinion the confusing method figures are referenced in the text. I also have a concern with the very small sample size. However, given this is a pilot study small sample size from convenience sample is understandable. I do think with revisions this manuscript could contribute to address this important issue. Specific comments are included below:

Review 1: example c/o Dr. Hughes

***Report 1 (excerpt)***

“ [The topic of section 1] would have been a very productive focus for an entire essay, and if this essay could be recast in that direction, it would provide a fascinating and timely addition to available scholarship. As it is, however, the essay seems to me unfinished and not ready for publication.”

***Report 2 (excerpt)***

“This is a well-structured, clearly expressed argument which benefits from a very fluent writing style. The debate is intriguing and often very persuasive... and has interesting wider implications. I would recommend it for publication with some relatively minor amendments.”

***Report 3 (excerpt)***

“Unfortunately, the vast secondary work already available on 7/8 of the essay undermines its potential for publication, especially in its present state.

Review 2: example from a past project of mine

***Editor's response***

"Due to the two reports more critical in nature, the mainly positive response was less persuasive ... The two remaining readers ask for rather different approaches to revision. The author is asked to do as much as possible with both, especially Report #3."

Review 2, continued --



What do you do with  
a revise and resubmit?

# Mapping out revision steps: the matrix

Recommended reading: “[How to Respond to a ‘Revise and Resubmit’ from an Academic Journal: Ten Steps to a Successful Revision](#)” (Dr. Tanya Golash-Boza)

Key recommendation: “Read the reviews to extract the suggestions for revision and **put the suggestions in the Excel file**. This step requires the painful and painstaking process of **closely reading the reviews and extracting all of the useful suggestions**. On some occasions, the reviews can contain useful information, but not relay the information in a congenial fashion. The beauty of this step is that you can rewrite the suggestions...”

# Mapping out revision steps: the matrix

**Drafts Review Matrix: National Policy Styles book chapter**

(Tosun & Howlett, eds)

Page	Reference Paragraph-Text	Editor/Reviewer Suggestion	Action to take	Deadline	Comments	Check
1		"Our reading of the chapter was that sectors matter, which needs to be spelled out more clearly and needs to be better discussed"	Clearly spell out which sectors matter, how they matter, and what is the <u>relationship between</u> sectors, national and subnational policy styles, political regimes, etc.			
1		"There are some redundancies, which need to be removed"	Revisit section where redundancies are mentioned, and remove those			
2	"The paper is organized as follows"	"Perhaps consult these two publications"	Integrated these publications into the reference list, and <u>made reference to the work within this paragraph</u>		Downloaded these papers, to read and incorporate.	
3	"A note on research methods"	"I would incorporate this into the case study"	Move to the case study section and briefly expand. I think I should add more on the methods simply because it's something that (a) I enjoy and (b) this chapter would benefit – and the book as well – from a more detailed discussion on comparative case studies		Already moved the section, need to expand on methods.	

% Dr. Raul Pacheco-Vega  
[A complete explanation of his matrix can be found here, as can a ton of helpful writing advice](#)



August 16, 2016

Dr. Firstname Lastname  
Editor-in-Chief, *Big Important Journal*

**RE: (“Title of Article”)**

Dr. Lastname:

Allow us to again express our most sincere gratitude and appreciation for the insightful and constructive feedback. We appreciate the opportunity to further revise the manuscript and submit.

We have again done our best to incorporate the reviewers' and your suggestions. We are of the opinion that the manuscript has improved greatly due to the thoughtful and constructive feedback provided. Should in the opinions of the reviewers or yourself any further revisions be needed, we welcome that opportunity.

As we did with the previous submission, within the body of the manuscript we highlighted our edits in **blue and bold font** for quick identification. We also provide detailed response to each comment.

Again our sincere appreciation to you, the reviewers and your staff for your consideration and time.

Cover letter % Dr. Hughes

## Example responses to reviewers % Dr. Hughes

*Thank you – we appreciate the process; our manuscript has benefited tremendously from the insightful, constructive feedback. Should any further revisions be suggested, we welcome that opportunity.*

Detailed response to referee #1 per comments/suggestions in word document:

### Abstract

- > For cancer survivors, who also often present with co-existing health issues, exercise testing is

*Text changed to “conditions”*

For cancer survivors, who also often present with co-existing health **conditions**

- > BB participants, the mean VO<sub>2</sub>HR approached significant difference than the mean VO<sub>2</sub>RPE, (21.7 and 17.6, respectively;  $p = .087$ ). Bland-Altman plots for both methods showed a

*Units added.*

BB participants, the mean VO<sub>2</sub>HR approached significant difference than the mean VO<sub>2</sub>RPE, (21.7 mlO<sub>2</sub>/kg/min and 17.6 mlO<sub>2</sub>/kg/min, respectively;  $p = .087$ ).

### Introduction

- > Many of these references are dated (introduction paragraph 1)

*References updated and text revised accordingly.*

Many cancer survivors tend to decrease their activity levels after diagnosis, and even for those who had been active, few return to their former levels of activity after treatment ([Bourke et al, 2014](#); [Courneya and Friedenreich, 1997](#); [Schmitz et al, 2010](#)). Adopting and maintaining a physically active lifestyle is an important intervention for cancer survivors because it can improve their emotional well-being ([Benton, Schlairet, and Gibson, 2014](#); [Courneya, 2003](#); [Cuevas et al, 2014](#)) and physical functioning ([Hughes et al, 2015](#); [Schmitz et al, 2010](#); [Winters-Stone et al, 2012](#)) as well as reduce the risk of other chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease ([Kirkham et al, 2016](#); [LaCroix et al, 1996](#)), and cancer recurrence ([Ballard-Barbash et al, 2012](#); [Holmes et al, 2005](#); [Schmitz et al, 2010](#)).



# Q&A

(for follow-up questions: [kisokawa@gmail.com](mailto:kisokawa@gmail.com))

## Acknowledgements

→ Conversations with Arely Perez and Danny Hughes helped me translate what I knew about publication for a public health audience. Thank you!

→ As a graduate student I used Wendy Belcher's *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* to help me prepare journal submissions. This book covers all of this material I've addressed here in much greater depth, helping you formulate a week-by-week, day-by-day plan. You can find parts of Belcher's book on [Google Books](#), but it is really worth buying the whole thing on [Amazon](#) or elsewhere if you can.

