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## Editors' Newsroom: Why our integrity as researchers matters

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In this edition of *Editors' Newsroom*, Dr. Keren Segal joins Managing Editor, Alexandra Cheyne, to discuss research integrity: why it matters and how to protect it.

### Keywords

editors' newsroom, SBP, research integrity, ethics, authorship

*Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal (SBP)* was established with a particular goal of removing unnecessary hurdles and obstacles from the publication process, especially for early-career researchers. We remain committed to helping new researchers become established on a path to publishing success, and to have a long and fruitful career. Perhaps some of you reading are in the early days of learning what it means to be a published author. And what does *integrity* as a researcher and author mean?

It is a privilege to be an author, one shared and treasured by our *SBP* Associate Editors (Ana Stojanov, Keren Segal, and Yvette Lamb), each of whom publish in their specialized field. They also know the joys and challenges of publishing original research. In this edition of *Editors' Newsroom*, Dr. Keren Segal joins Managing Editor, Alexandra Cheyne, to discuss research integrity: why it matters and how to protect it.

### What's so Special About Authorship?

Authorship allows you to share with the outside world what you have been working on for a (very) long time in your laboratory and in front of your computer. It really is the highlight of all our effort! It allows us, as researchers, to see that what we have done matters and that others can benefit and learn from our work. No less important, the process of writing allows us to develop thoughts, understanding, and insights from our research, and how it links to the broader field. It also enables us to contribute to the world by sharing this knowledge.

When we reach the stage of authorship, we can already see ourselves as experts in the specific study that we have conducted. This form of mastery allows us to say something about our work (and the world) that goes beyond mere statistical findings. It imbues us with the research-based confidence to discuss our work in relation to previous empirical and theoretical writings. We take pride in the knowledge that we employed the highest standards of research that we could in the design of our study and its implementation.

### What Challenges do Authors in Psychology Face Today?

There are several new challenges that we need to manage. First, in academia today, a heavy weight is put on publication for promotion and career development. At the same time, there are thousands and thousands of journal articles being published. This leads both to an overflow of information and a need to focus on very niche topics, as so much has already been written about so many things.

Second, in many academic career paths publication is a prerequisite for researchers, but there is no real promise of stability in the ever-changing job market. Publishing may seem like a chore and lose some of its potential joy and meaning, especially with no certain financial prospects at the end of this path.

Last, but definitely not least, there are additional challenges for researchers who are not native English speakers. They may need to compete with researchers who have a greater availability of funding and training opportunities, and they have the added pressure of writing in a language that is not their own.

### **What Concerns Might Arise From This Situation?**

What might happen is that we are tempted to take shortcuts in academic writing to *make things work*.

Some shortcuts are welcome: referencing tools assist us in forming accurate reference lists, and proofreading software or services can help to improve the written word. However, some shortcuts involve breaching ethical boundaries that are extremely important for our work as academics. Taking such shortcuts is a form of disrespect to ourselves; it undermines all that effort in putting our work together and brings into question our genuine entitlement to the training and skills we have spent so much on acquiring. Put differently, just as we wouldn't accept misconduct from our students (or our medical doctor!), we would not want to find ourselves, no matter the pressure we are under, doing the same.

### **Why Does Research Integrity Even Matter?**

Think of research integrity as a wall built of hundreds of individual bricks that together create something strong and dependable. Research integrity gives us confidence in the research process and in all scholarly publishing, built from the individual acts of authors dedicated to upholding that body of work. Here are some ways we see authors acting ethically and with integrity:

- Accurately listing the contributions of authors and others
- Acknowledging any conflicts of interest
- Obtaining and documenting ethical approval
- Publishing all results, not just those that support the authors' hypotheses
- Writing up their own research

What is jeopardized by breaches of research integrity? Like blocks falling or crumbling from a brick wall, each individual breach weakens society's trust in the scientific process. See the [UK Research Integrity Office's website](#) for more on this.

Here are some examples of issues that may be tempting to exploit, but that breach our integrity as researchers and authors:

- Guest/gift authorship: authors are listed who do not qualify as such
- "Ghostwriters": fraudulent businesses or individuals writing manuscripts on behalf of authors, for a fee
- Paper mills: fraudulent businesses or individuals offering an authorship position on a manuscript with the promise of guaranteed publication, for a fee

### **What Legitimate Tools Can We Use?**

What *can* researchers do, especially as writing in English does not come easily to many of us? Asking for the help of an editor is a great way to bring our writing to a publishable level, and we can learn from the process and gain new skills.

*SBP* also has a thorough evaluation and editing process that will assist authors in achieving a high level of fluency and coherency.

Working hard and publishing our own writing is an amazing achievement; it's something we can take pride in—especially if it is published in an international journal and is read by researchers all around the world. It is worth protecting the value of that achievement!