

Strategies for Revising and Resubmitting Papers to Refereed Journals*

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We explored *what* authors allegedly do and *why*, when invited to revise and resubmit manuscripts to refereed journals. Based on responses from 249 business and management scholars from the UK and USA, we found that authors preferred to resubmit to the original journal, whether the required revision was minor or major, and that under certain circumstances other options would be considered: submitting to alternative journals, sometimes without revising at all; discarding the paper; or challenging the editor. Experience in publishing was found to be an important moderator. As to ‘why’ they purport to do so, a classification of qualitative responses yielded a matrix of four optional strategies, grouped along two axes: rationale (instrumental reasoning versus ethical reasoning) and agency (individually centred reasoning versus community-centred reasoning). Most responses were located in the instrumental/self-centred quadrant.

Scientific publications are at the heart of science as a system (Luhmann, 1984; Stichweh, 1998) and publishing is an essential feature of academics’ work (Cummings and Frost, 1995). Indeed, ‘publish or perish’ has become synonymous with academic careers (cf. Baruch and Hall, 2004; Rynes *et al.*, 2005). In the social and behavioural sciences, reputations are gained through publication in refereed journals (Daft, 1995; Frost and Taylor, 1995; Huff, 1999), a trend maintained and reinforced by peer pressure (Bedeian, 2004) and funding agencies. Periodical research assessments at national level are playing a major role in directing publishing behaviour (see Bessant *et al.*, 2003; Geary, Marriott and Rowlinson, 2004, for the UK Research Assessment Exercise, now

increasingly being emulated by other countries; THES, 2005).

For the great majority of papers submitted to established and well considered refereed journals, outright acceptance is rare, and in top journals virtually non-existent (Jackson, 1996; Rynes *et al.*, 2005). In fact, the rejection rate is a perceived indication of a journal’s standing: the harder it is to get published, the more prestige such a journal publication may bestow. Given the high visibility and high impact that publishing in refereed journals bears on academia as an institution and on academic careers (Pfeffer, Leong and Strehl, 1976), it is surprising that so little guidance is to be found in the literature on the writing and development of manuscripts. We know very little about authors’ publishing tactics and strategies (Chia, 2003; Huff, 1999; Newman and Cooper, 1993).

Faced with a significant opportunity-cost investment and high uncertainty about outcomes, what do authors do? In answering this, we hope to advance our understanding of a central plank of the scholarly enterprise. We propose to examine

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the declared decision process of authors invited to revise and resubmit (R&R) their manuscripts to scholarly journals, hoping to discern the normative way knowledge creation is propagated within our professional community.

Hypotheses development

When a paper is not explicitly rejected or unconditionally accepted, authors are invited to resubmit it following a minor or major re-write (usually without guarantee of acceptance). Authors could arguably follow one of seven options:

- (1) discard the paper;
- (2) submit 'as it is' to another journal of similar or better standard;
- (3) submit 'as it is' to another journal of lower standard;
- (4) revise and submit to another journal of similar or better standard;
- (5) revise and submit to another journal of lower standard;
- (6) R&R to the original journal; or
- (7) challenge the editor's decision.

In line with rational choice theory, authors would wish to maximize outcomes (March, 1994), publishing their work in outlets conferring the highest prestige and widest impact, since academic achievements are closely linked to a journal's reputation (Baruch and Hall, 2004; Caplow and McGee, 1958; Taylor, 1999). Aiming for the best result, authors would target the highest rated journals that are likely to favourably consider their submission. If rejected, they would re-evaluate their prospects in other journals, usually by 'grading down' (Cooper, 2004; Schepmyer and Starik, 2003). However, not all decisions follow this simple rule of thumb. Sometimes authors prefer a fast publication, or may have an established relationship with a particular journal; others are less concerned about reputations. The standing of journals is not always clear-cut either – there are numerous ranking lists, following different criteria and manifest opinions (e.g. BBS, 2005; *Financial Times*, 2005; Harzing, 2006; ISI, 2006; Starbuck, 2004; Warwick, 2004).

With a wide variety of journals to aim for, fluctuations in status and variance in feedback

quality and response time, decisions are neither simple nor obvious. Hence, the questions arise: what do scholars report to be doing when asked by journal editors to R&R a manuscript and why do they purport to do so?

In the context of bounded rationality (Cyert and March, 1963), Kahneman and Tversky (1984) posit that all undertakings for which there is no advance knowledge of consequences may be construed as 'risky'. Prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) submits that one may exhibit a risk-averse or risk-seeking tendency (gains or losses implicated are investments such as reputation, time and opportunity); but since losses appear to be more difficult to bear than the attractiveness of potential gains (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984), decision-makers are biased towards maintaining an extant position. Hence, authors will respond favourably to positive indications present in an invitation to resubmit, whilst negative indications may be discounted due to effort already dispensed. Escalation of commitment theory (Moon, 2001; Staw, 1981) argues that sunk costs (i.e. investments already made) bias one towards maintaining an existing course of action (i.e. R&R to the original journal).

Following from both prospect and escalation of commitment theories, authors are expected to R&R to the original journal when the demanded revision is minimal, since that journal is the initial venue chosen (commitment already made) and the reviews précis what requirements would make the paper publishable (low risk action). We therefore hypothesize the following.

H1: Option 6, 'R&R to the original journal', will be the preferred choice for a minor revision.

For a major revision we would also expect that the weight of an investment and commitment already made (choosing a journal, waiting for decision) and the chance of getting published would tip the balance towards R&R to the original journal. But the compound effect of further investment and the uncertainty about its outcome should enhance the attractiveness of alternative options as well – as expectancy value theories (Porter and Lawler, 1968; Vroom, 1964) suggest. The actual decision may hinge on a number of issues. The author's initial expectations – a too demanding R&R ('I can't do it', 'I won't do it') – would mitigate against R&R to the

original journal and doubts about the outcome may be hardened by an ambiguous invite from the editors. The communication ‘packaging’ (Elsbach and Eloffson, 2000) as well as its ‘conversational’ qualities (Boje, Oswick and Ford, 2004) would be relevant here. Taking these into account, and in line with the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) which suggests that antecedents such as values and norms will direct people’s intentions, followed by actions, we hypothesize the following.

H2a: Option 6, ‘R&R to the original journal’, will be the preferred choice for a major revision.

H2b: Option 6, ‘R&R to the original journal’, will be the more preferred choice for a minor revision than for a major revision.

Decision-making may be influenced by past behaviour, as ‘learned, habitual response patterns exhibited by an individual when confronted with a decision situation’ (Scott and Bruce, 1995, p. 820). Experienced authors may comply more willingly with the implicit rules of publishing than novice authors, which would suggest conformity with an invitation to R&R. Veteran authors who have been socialized into academe have also learned not to underestimate the risks involved in opting for a new journal. Hence, ‘the instability of preferences produces a preference for stability’ (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984, p. 348). With greater uncertainty (as with a major revision) we would expect that experience of publishing would guide a more cautious response. Experience may also translate to confidence in one’s ability to meet the requirements of a major revision, since ‘the motivating potential of outcome expectancies is partly governed by beliefs of personal capabilities ... efficacy beliefs contribute to performance’ (Bandura, 1997, p. 126). We therefore hypothesize the following.

H3: More experienced authors will have a lower inclination to opt for other options apart from Option 6, ‘R&R to the original journal’, than less experienced authors.

Confidence, as borne out by experience, will also be manifested in willingness to challenge the editor’s decision: a drastic response, but not uncommon. For a minor revision, this course of action would not be considered worthwhile (the

risk of annoying the editor might be greater than the required revision investment), prescribing risk aversion (Jessop, 2004). With a major revision, given the balance between potential gains and sunk costs (Moon, 2001), the risk may be well worth taking (Kühberger, Schulte-Mecklenbeck and Perner, 2002). Experienced authors would be more inclined to challenge the editor in a major revision than less experienced authors. However, with a minor revision, experienced scholars have presumably learned to discern between circumstances amenable to risk taking and occasions calling for risk aversion. Less experienced authors may not have learned that yet. We therefore hypothesize the following.

H4: With a major revision, more experienced authors are more likely to challenge the editor than less experienced authors; with a minor revision, more experienced authors are less likely to challenge the editor than less experienced authors.

Method

To find out ‘what’ authors report to be doing and ‘why’ they purportedly do so, quantitative and qualitative methods were applied respectively. We employed a random sampling frame, asking academics in a postal survey to explain what would be their response to different options and for what reasons, in two hypothetical cases (minor versus major revisions).

Participants

Questionnaires were sent to research-active management/business faculty members of large and small universities in the USA and the UK, using a random sampling framework, and 249 completed usable questionnaires were received. Of them 136 were from UK scholars and 113 from US scholars (a response rate of just over 40%). The number of published refereed papers (as self-reported) ranged widely (0–150), averaging 23.03 (SD 24.82) (see Table 1 for characteristics).

Research tool

The one-page questionnaire (see Appendix) included the following scenario: ‘Having submitted

a paper to a good, refereed journal (though not a top one), you received a reply from the editor indicating that the paper is not accepted as it stands and that certain revisions are necessary. The letter invites you to resubmit the paper, without guarantee that it would be published. The options you would face are listed below. Please indicate, based on your past experience, what would be your likely response.⁷ Two options were posited: (a) a minor revision invited, and (b) a major revision invited. In addition, respondents were asked to explain the reasons for their decisions, and to provide relevant background data.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics^a

		n = 249	%
Gender	Male	176	71
	Female	62	25
	No reply	11	4
Experience	First time	4	1.5
	Beginner	44	18
	Relative novice	71	28.5
	Experienced	71	28.5
	Veteran	57	23
Sector	No reply	2	1
	Finance/accounting	58	23
	OB/HRM	53	21
	Marketing	27	11
	General/strategy	35	14
	Economy	35	14
	IT/IS	16	6
	Other/missing	25	10

OB/HRM, organizational behaviour/human resource management; IT/IS, information technology/information systems.

^aSelf-defined.

Table 2. Likelihood of response to a revision demand

Option	Minor revision		Major revision	
	Mean ^a	SD	Mean ^a	SD
1. Forget about the paper (throw it away)	1.11	0.570	1.64	1.296
2. Submit it AS IT IS to another journal of similar or better standard	1.91	1.507	2.49	1.737
3. Submit it AS IT IS to another journal of lower standard	1.64	1.284	2.64	1.850
4. Revise and submit to another journal of similar or better standard	2.40	1.923	3.24	2.016
5. Revise and submit to another journal of lower standard	1.83	1.445	2.70	1.879
6. Revise and resubmit to the original journal	6.77	0.926	5.75	1.523
7. Challenge the editor on the decision	1.83	1.464	2.35	1.693

^aOn a scale from very low (1) to very high (7).

n varies between 236 and 248 due to incomplete responses. All differences are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

Results

Comparison between the US and UK samples revealed no significant difference between the two populations for most variables. Significant differences were found for level of experience: US scholars reported a higher level of publication experience (3.7 versus 3.4 for UK scholars, $0.05 > p$) and a marginally higher number of publications (26.2 versus 20.3 for UK scholars, $0.07 = p$). Thus, we felt justified to combine the two populations for the analysis. The descriptive statistics of the responses are presented in Table 2 and the correlations are presented in Table 3.

Hypotheses testing

The nature of the data meant that a three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with two within-subjects factors could test the hypotheses. The within-subjects factors were option (forget the paper through to challenge the editor) and revision (minor versus major). The between-subjects factor was experience. Hypothesis 1 proposed that authors would prefer Option 6, 'R&R to the original journal', for a minor revision. Our data support the hypothesis. Authors almost always will R&R to the original journal (Option 6) for a minor revision, though some would consider Option 4 (see Table 2). Applying Mauchly's test of sphericity, we had significant results at $\chi^2_{(df=20)} = 267.75$; $p < 0.0001$ (Geisser Greenhouse = 0.73). Hypothesis 1 was supported by the significant main effect for option: ANOVA revealed an F test of differences among the means of $F_{(4.09, 953.4)} = 611.59$; $p < 0.0001$, with $\eta^2 = 0.72$. Hypothesis 1 was further tested for the difference between R&R and all other options combined, and

Table 3. Correlation table

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Level of experience										
2. No. of publications	0.64**									
3. Gender	-0.32**	-0.20**								
4. Major-submit 'as is' to a better journal	-0.04	0.03	-0.10							
5. Major-submit 'as is' to a lower journal	-0.11	-0.09	0.00	0.56**						
6. Major-R&R to original journal	0.03	0.04	0.06	-0.24**	-0.31**					
7. Major-bin the paper	-0.17**	-0.01	-0.01	0.10	0.26**	-0.10				
8. Major-R&R to a better journal	-0.14*	-0.10	0.09	0.32**	0.37**	-0.17*	0.22**			
9. Major-R&R to a lower journal	-0.16*	-0.12	0.01	0.14*	0.44**	-0.17**	0.26**	0.53**		
10. Major-challenge editor	0.09	0.15*	-0.02	0.15*	0.07	0.03	0.17*	0.10	0.03	
11. Minor-challenge editor	-0.04	-0.05	-0.00	0.14*	0.06	-0.09	0.19**	0.10	0.05	0.58**

Major = major revision required; Minor = minor revision required.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

the t test comparisons were also significant (at $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 2a was supported by the significant main effect for option. Thus, for a major revision, as for a minor one, Option 6 was found to be the most likely. Again, we first used Mauchley's test of sphericity finding it significant at $\chi^2_{(df = 20)} = 195.30$; $p < 0.0001$ (Geisser Greenhouse = 0.77). ANOVA resulted in $F(4.62, 1035.9) = 192.32$; $p < 0.0001$. The t test comparisons were also significant (at $p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis 2b suggested, though, that the inclination for Option 6 will be significantly lower than with a minor revision. Results show an average of 5.75 (SD 1.52) for major revision versus 6.77 (SD 0.86) for minor revision. Mauchley's test of sphericity could not be calculated with only two groups; thus no Geisser Greenhouse is calculated. Hypothesis 2b was supported by the significant option by revision interaction: $F(5.16, 1109.67) = 41.27$; $p < 0.0001$. As in Hypothesis 2a, t tests between major and minor revisions similarly were significant too (paired t test results: $t_{(242)} = 11.32$, $p < 0.0001$). This means that with a major revision authors appear to consider the full spectrum of options. Indeed Option 4 is the second most likely choice (as it is for a minor revision), but with considerably higher likelihood (3.24 and 2.40 respectively, $p < 0.01$) for major revision.

One intriguing finding was the large number of scholars (30.7%) who would consider submitting a paper to a different journal without any amendments (ratings from 'quite likely' to 'very likely'), arguably ignoring (or dismissing) reviewers' critique, against the norms of scholarly

practice (Baruch, Sullivan and Schepmyer, 2006). More though would reject this option categorically (44%). Not surprisingly, respondents were more likely to revise a paper for a similar or better standard journal than for a lower standard journal. This applies in both instances: a minor revision (2.40 and 1.83 respectively, $p < 0.01$) as well as a major one (3.24 and 2.70 respectively, $p < 0.01$). Finally, it is worth noting that Option 1, 'discarding the paper', is overall the least likely taken (however, more would consider this option for a major revision: 1.64 versus 1.11, $p < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 3 was partially supported by the results of ANOVA (Mauchley's test of sphericity was not relevant for correlations or for between-group analyses; thus no Geisser Greenhouse was calculated). Testing for the effect of option \times experience, the test of differences among the means was significant at $F(13.17, 944.15) = 2.43$; $p < 0.001$.

For the correlations of relevance to Hypothesis 3 we note the following. Experience correlated negatively (significantly) with the inclination to discard the paper or to R&R to another journal (of the same standard or better, as well as of a lower standard). Experience correlated positively with Option 6, 'R&R to the original journal' (but not significantly – due to the high propensity to choose this option). Correlations with all the other options were negative (three of them statistically significant). Hypothesis 3 proposed that more experienced authors would less readily choose options other than Option 6, and overall, then, Hypothesis 3 receives partial support.

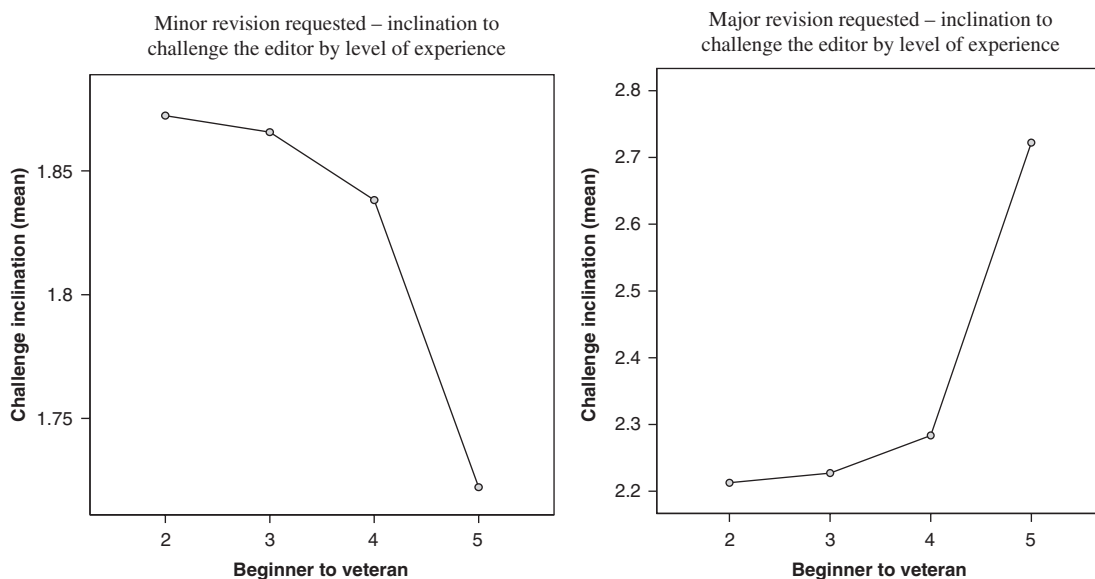


Figure 1. Inclination to challenge the editor by experience

Hypothesis 4 proposed that publishing experience would be associated with a higher inclination to challenge the editor for a major revision, and inversely for a minor revision. This hypothesis was not supported since the option \times experience \times revision interaction effect was not significant: the test of differences among the means was $F(15.48, 1109.67) = 1.34$; $p = 0.166$ (not significant). However, the correlations between experience and the various options by revision show that this effect is in the anticipated direction.

Figure 1 presents the difference in direction of impact, in line with the anticipated outcome, but not significant. Hypothesis 4 is therefore not supported.

A taxonomy of R&R strategic reasoning

Hitherto we have addressed the first question posed: *what* do scholars report to be doing when asked to R&R a manuscript? Turning to the second question as to *why* they would choose that course of action, we asked: 'Can you indicate the main reasons for your "most likely" options?' We received 192 usable responses, which were thematically differentiated by each of the two authors separately (a third scholar moderated any disagreements), and the data were content analysed (Kirppendorff, 1989).

We identified the following distinctive categories, which grouped into a two-dimensional matrix of arguments. One axis, *rationale*, distin-

guishes between an *instrumental* reasoning and an *ethical* one. The other axis, *agency*, distinguishes between a reasoning centring on the *individual* and one focusing on the *community* as a whole. Combined, the model comprises four quadrants, as presented in Figure 2.

Our approach fits well with the framework offered by Weber, Ames and Blais (2005), who proposed a taxonomy of decision logics. Their *calculation-based decision-making* corresponds to our Q1 (*instrumental/self-centred*); their *rule-based decision-making* corresponds to our Q2 (*instrumental/community*); their *case-based decision-making* corresponds to our Q3 (*ethical/community*); and lastly, their *role-based decision-making* corresponds to our Q4 (*ethical/self-centred*). The majority of responses indeed conformed to one or other of the above.

Below, we list representative quotes for each category.¹ Responses are given verbatim, without editing. Each category also lists indicative non-compliance statements.

Quadrant 1: Self-centred/instrumental argument: 'A bird (almost) in the hand is worth two in the bush! ...'

This is the largest category (in number of responses). The stress is on practical arguments that are self-centred and calculated:

¹The full set of responses may be obtained from the second author (y.baruch@uea.ac.uk).

The odds of an ‘accept’ after an R&R, at the original journal, are greater than sending it to a totally new journal. . . . Transaction costs are very high. If the comments are sensible, the best course is to resubmit to the same journal. . . . I believe the greatest probability of ultimate acceptance is with the journal that has indicated some interest in the paper. . . . Probability of acceptance is higher at the original journal with the original reviewers; although it depends on how ‘major’ the revision is. . . . Don’t change horses in the middle of the stream. . . . Sending it off to a different journal might raise additional objections and further delay publication. . . . Advice from one journal may not transfer to views for another. . . .

A major thread that ran through the commentary was: ‘R&R to the original journal reduces “time to publication” . . . why waste the time already invested in a piece . . . ’ (34 out of 94 comments).

Reasons given for opting *not* to R&R to the original journal (non-compliance) were as follows:

A major revision merely indicates a serious limitation and may be too difficult to accomplish. . . . If the paper needs major revision and the journal is ‘average’ it may not be worth the time and effort to fix the paper. . . . Inertia – the sense that I would rather find a journal that would publish what I want to write, than publish what the journal wants me to write.

Quadrant 2: Community-centred/instrumental argument: ‘This is the way the system works . . . ’

Emphasis in this category is on embracing critique as the logic of the academic community of practice; the driver is self-benefit:

. . . I have normally found (R&R to original journal) to be the requirement of the review processes with which I have been concerned (i.e. they have to find something wrong!) so this is part of the rule in getting published . . . this is part of the refereeing process, i.e. it is almost inbuilt that referees will ask for some changes. . . . I feel that I have no option other than to do what the reviewers and editor request, no matter how onerous, intrusive, and at times, plain ridiculous. . . . To resubmit as it is, even to another journal, is foolish – as the same reviewers may see it and reject outright a second time.

Non-compliance:

A major revision might move the paper from its original intent. . . . A major revision merely

indicates a serious limitation and may be too difficult to accomplish. . . . The request for major revisions may be a polite form of refusal. . . . To get a second opinion without having to do further work.

Quadrant 3: Community-centred/ethical argument: ‘This is “fair play”’

The stress in the following arguments is on the ‘common good’ – a community of practice perspective combined with a moral position on the mission of scholarship:

Belief that the editorial revisions improve the paper’s content and quality. . . . This is the decent thing to do. . . . It’s only fair to resubmit to the journal that has invested the time and effort. . . . I feel that authors/editors have some moral obligations to each other.

Non-compliance:

This is predominantly a political game. . . . We are playing and as a result I have little respect for many supposedly impartial referees. . . . Major revisions required often highlight genuine improvements – but also may reflect quirky views (and vested interests) of inappropriate reviewers. . . . Publication can be a ‘lucky draw’.

Quadrant 4: Self-centred/ethical argument: ‘Comments help make a better paper’

In this category, arguments link self-benefit with a position on the moral economy embedded in the publishing relationship:

Would prefer to resubmit and rework if I can appreciate the changes required: I see this as part of self-development and learning. . . . No paper is perfect, so I would appreciate the referee’s comments as developmental. . . . By submitting to (a) journal you have entered into a relationship.

Non-compliance:

I have very little faith in the refereeing process . . . many referees’ comments clearly protect vested interests. . . . Many reviewers do not fully understand the papers they are asked to review. . . . There is a lot of ‘back scratching’ going on, despite what is said about blind refereeing.

Most respondents’ (about three-quarters) positions were in one of the above four categories; about one-quarter of positions were located in

Agency Rationale	Self-centred	Community-centred
Instrumental	Q1 <i>'This is the most cost-effective way to publish. I aim to maximize my research output' ...('though it may not be worth the effort')</i> [94 responses]	Q2 <i>'This is how the system works, and I have to comply. These are the "rules of the game"... (however, 'I may try to "beat them"')</i> [52 responses]
Ethical	Q4 <i>'Peer reviewing makes me a better researcher, improves the paper, and enhances scholarship'...(but 'I don't trust the process')</i> [30 responses]	Q3 <i>'This is "fair-play", the decent thing to do'...(alas, 'it is a political game')</i> [16 responses]

n = 192; some responses were classified under two quadrants.

Figure 2. A taxonomy of R&R reasoning

two categories and a fraction (two subjects) had positions in three of the four.

Discussion

We set out to explore an under-researched issue central to the enterprise of academe: identifying what authors entertain when faced with a resubmission invitation – the most common outcome for articles submitted to refereed journals in the social/behavioural sciences. This crucial gap in our comprehension of contemporary scholarship begs to be addressed.

We asked, first, what scholars report to be doing when invited to R&R; and second, for what reasons they purportedly do so. To answer these questions, quantitative and qualitative methods were employed respectively. We hypothesized (Hypotheses 1 and 2) that, overall, authors would prefer to R&R to the original journal (less for a major revision than for a minor one). Experience in publishing would increase prospects to R&R to the original journal (Hypothesis 3) as well as the inclination to challenge the editor's decision (Hypothesis 4).

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were fully confirmed: for a minor R&R, authors overwhelmingly preferred to R&R to the original journal; for a major

R&R, certain other options were also considered. Partial support was found for Hypothesis 3. The reasons for the inconclusive results may be due to the weight of experience. Veteran authors may better determine their chances to succeed in a revision and perhaps the more experienced authors realistically size up their chances and move on in face of a difficult R&R. Maybe a less experienced author, more naïve, would pursue even a most difficult R&R because they do not know any better. Hypothesis 4 results were in the predicted direction, but not statistically significant; hence the hypothesis is unsupported. This may be explained in the generally low inclination to opt for challenging the editor as a viable option.

Throughout the paper we have been careful to position our data as reported intentions of action, in line with the cautionary advice advanced by Nisbett and Wilson (1977). Nevertheless, we concur with Ericsson and Simon (1984) that subjects' reports may be viewed as 'hard' rather than 'soft' data where verbal protocols yield valid representations of decision-making processes (cf. Anderson, 1985; Furnham, 1988, p. 17); and likewise, as the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) would suggest. We believe that by eliciting fictitious but real-life scenarios, drawing attention to their past experience, we have

heightened our respondents' awareness; and thus their reports may be taken as an approximation for actual behaviour. This assumption needs to be validated in future research.

The results are compatible with the reasoning underpinning our posited hypotheses. Both prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) and escalation of commitment theory (Moon, 2001; Staw, 1981) predicted that R&R to the original journal would be adopted as the preferred strategy. A relevant finding was that respondents were more likely to revise a paper for a similar or better standard journal than for a lower standard journal. Hence, it was deemed worthwhile to invest in revising for a 'good' journal but less so for a lower ranked journal.

Qualitative analysis conducted on respondents' reasoning for their anticipated choice of action revealed four prevailing rationales. Most responses were either/or: one would be either *self-centred/instrumental* (Q1) ('I look for a cost-effective way to publish'); or *community-centred/instrumental* (Q2) ('I have got to comply with the "rules of the game"'); or *community-centred/ethical* (Q3) ('it's the decent thing to do'); or *self-centred/ethical* (Q4) ('peer reviewing improves my scholarship'). Publishing 'sense making' (Weick, 2001) thus drives the rationale that justifies R&R choices and guides reported action. The predominance of responses in Q1 (94 against 98 in all other categories combined) suggests a highly self-centred/instrumental approach to publishing, as does the finding that nearly a third of respondents would not modify their paper in response to reviewers' critique before trying their luck with another journal.

We identified non-compliance incidents, which do not challenge the peer review principle or resubmission demands (Bedeian, 2003). They caution us though to consider the following: (a) adverse effects (such as dismissive or offending commentary by editors or reviewers); (b) disproportionate investment requests (compared to expected publication benefits (Jarley, Chandler and Faulk, 1998)); (c) questionable commitment to an academic career, e.g. 'low achievement aspiration' (Costa and McCrae, 1992); or (d) sheer opportunism, such as multiple submissions (Omega, 2006).

We hope these findings will inform the academic community of the behind-the-scenes of R&R current practice, equipping scholars to

better reason with R&R considerations, as well as providing stakeholders with an in-depth understanding of this important aspect of the scholarly enterprise.

Implications and future research

Our study bears evidence on professional practice at both the individual and community levels. For individuals, implications concern academic productivity, professional development and career advancement. A major revision increases the likelihood that scholars may not R&R to the original journal. The uncertainty a major revision presents calls attention to editors'–authors' communications: style, format, tone and explication, among others (Boje, Oswick and Ford, 2004; Feldman, 2006). Authors, particularly novices, would benefit from understanding these imbued messages. At the very least that may reduce the need for further rounds of resubmission. Ways and means of socializing newcomers into publishing (Morrison, 2002) would be a worthwhile undertaking.

At the community level, the findings point to a normative playing field, whereby implicit acceptance of the 'rules of the game' is apparent. Most would R&R to the original journal and very few would challenge editors' decisions.²

²With the discrepancy between intent and behaviour in mind, we attempted to find out what scholars *really do* when they do not R&R to the original journal. That proved to be a challenging task. We approached the editors of six good quality journals (ranked A/B in the Harzing (2006) list) who agreed to help us. The population comprised authors invited to R&R who did not respond within eight months from the date of invitation. Altogether 89 cases were identified. We provided the editors with a standard letter to send out to the lead author, who was asked to reply directly to us on the action they took and their reasons for not responding to the invitation to R&R (confidentiality was assured as the authors' identity was not disclosed to us). Most authors declined to respond. Of those who did (17 scholars), the majority reported that they are still revising and plan to resubmit to the original journal (!). Only five authors indicated that they do not plan to R&R: one of them discarded the paper, another said it was submitted and accepted as a book chapter, and three 'admitted' that they had submitted to different journals (in one case due to a reviewer's 'unreasonable demands'). This exploratory investigation may suggest that complying with the normative convention is the prevalent attitude.

Where do we go from here? In truth it is difficult to say. The enormous waste of resources, lost knowledge and goodwill implicated in the current position of high rejection rates and the obligatory rounds of R&R is evident. Then again, it is a manifestation of the low paradigmatic development characteristic of business and management studies (Pfeffer, 1993) and that may not change overnight. At the same time, one cannot ignore the deficiencies in the prevalent epistemological stand, as highlighted in the *positive organizational scholarship* (Cameron, Dutton and Quinn, 2003) emergent movement.

It is worthy of note that as a professional community we operate in a truly ‘global village’, but editors’–authors’ communication language is English. It may well be a timely undertaking to study the cross-cultural ‘conversational’ implications of this (Boje, Oswick and Ford, 2004). Hence, a limitation of our study is its focus on predominately Anglo-Saxon communities. Cultural, national and institutional diversity would be relevant factors (Spicer, Dunfee and Bailey, 2004).

There are two further points. Having studied middle ranking refereed journals, we do not

know whether our findings extend to top tier or lower ranked journals. Also, we cannot ascertain the stability and dynamics of the presented reasoning for action. Looking for a maturation effect and personality correlates should better our understanding. Finally, our data are relevant to the field of business and management studies. Bearing in mind the level of paradigmatic development (Pfeffer, 1993), it remains an open empirical question as to their generalizability to other scholarly fields.

Summing up, publishing is the base building block of the academic enterprise (Huff, 1999; Luhmann, 1984), within which publishing in refereed journals dominates several disciplines, including business and management studies (Pfeffer, Leong and Strehl, 1976). Our findings provide insights on the behind-the-scenes decision-making processes of the main actors in the system – academics rank and file – when requested to R&R their manuscripts. We trust the results will be instrumental in helping scholars and editors make informed judgements in the course of designing, creating and disseminating knowledge, the life-blood of academe.

Appendix: Questionnaire

Scenario: Having submitted a paper to a good, refereed journal (though not a top one), you received a reply from the editor indicating that the paper is not accepted as it stands and that certain revisions are necessary. The letter invites you to resubmit the paper, without guarantee that it would be published. The options you would face are listed below. Please indicate, based on your past experience, what would be your likely response.

	most unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	most likely
	CASE 1								CASE 2
	a relatively <i>minor</i>								a relatively <i>major</i>
	revision is needed								revision is needed
• Throw the paper away and forget about it		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• Submit it AS IT IS to another journal of similar or better standard		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• Submit it AS IT IS to another journal of lower standard		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
• Revise and submit to another journal of similar or better standard		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- Revise and submit to another journal of lower standard 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Revise and resubmit to the original journal 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Challenge the editor on the decision 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For Case 2, can you indicate the main reasons for your ‘most likely’ option?

BACKGROUND DATA:

Do you consider yourself to be:

A first time author?

Quite a beginner author?

A moderately experienced author?

An author with considerable experience?

A veteran author?

How many refereed papers have you published?

What discipline are you in (e.g. marketing, finance, OB)? _____

What is your gender (please circle): Male / Female

University: _____

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