



Bob Uttl <uttlbob@gmail.com>

Re: Meta-analysis, On average undergraduate students' intelligence is average

Bob Uttl <uttlbob@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 12, 2024 at 9:39 AM

To: e.davelaar@bbk.ac.uk, sjaswal@cus.ac.in, axel cleeremans <axcleer@ulb.ac.be>, psychology@frontiersin.org

Dear Dr. Davelaar, Dr. Jaswal, Dr. Cleeremans, and Catriola Leslie:

As you may recall, on January 4, 2024, Dr. Jaswal, Assistant Specialty Chief Editor for *Frontiers in Psychology Cognitive Science*, acting as an editor, accepted our paper entitled "Meta-analysis: On average, undergraduate students' intelligence is merely average", and *Frontiers* immediately announced to the world the acceptance of our article and published its abstract on its website.

Thus, we were surprised when, on February 6, 2024, we received an email from Catriola Leslie at *Frontiers* notifying us that the journal was now "rejecting" the article, even though it had already accepted and its abstract already posted online. She described the reasons for this post-acceptance rejection as follows:

"Following the abstract being published online a number of overstated claims were brought to the attention of our Research Integrity team. These claims were raised to the Specialty Chief Editor, who has since highlighted issues with the reporting, methods and analysis and the scope fit for the journal that warrant rejection."

Her email also included a list of "Reporting quality issues" highlighted by "the Specialty Chief Editor." We asked Catriola Leslie and *Frontiers* to forward to us "any letters sent to the Specialty Chief Editor" (including concerns about any overstatements) and "to identify the Specialty Chief Editor or the person responsible for this rejection of our already accepted paper". That request has so far been ignored.

However, on February 9, 2024, *Frontiers in Psychology* issued a second rejection letter. The letter contained what we believe to be false reasons for the belated rejection decision. At the same time, *Frontiers* removed the published abstract from its website, meaning that up to 10,000,000 (as per Altmetrics) readers can no longer see it and must surely be wondering what happened to our paper.

After having no response to my repeated requests for clarification of the circumstances surrounding the journal's sudden rejection of our already-accepted article I had no choice but to publish a summary that documents the history of our article with *Frontiers in Psychology*:

<https://www.bobutt1.net/2024/02/12/when-did-a-rejection-of-an-already-accepted-article-become-a-thing/>

Before I take the matters further, I would ask **Dr. Davelaar and/or all those involved** in the situation to respond to the following questions:

1. Dr. Davelaar, are you, as described by Catriola Leslie in her emailed rejection letter "...the Specialty Chief Editor, who has since highlighted issues with the reporting, methods and analysis and the scope fit for the journal that warrant rejection"?
2. Dr. Davelaar, did you write the list of "issues" detailed in Catriola Leslie's rejection [rejection email](#), including those starting with "Title" and ending with two paragraphs of "Scope issues"? Catriola Leslie wrote that you did (assuming you are Specialty Chief Editor of *Frontiers in Psychology Cognitive Science*). If not, who did? Where did those issues come from? It seems to me that they were copy/pasted from somewhere. If so where from? Did you read the article yourself before you highlighted those issues?
3. Did you, Dr. Davelaar, write and/or approve the [second Frontiers rejection email](#) dated February 9, 2024, starting with "Unfortunately, I have to inform you..."?
4. Are you, Dr. Davelaar, taking responsibility, as the Specialty Chief Editor, for all the communications between *Frontiers* and our author team?
5. Who directed *Frontiers'* staff to remove our published abstract from the *Frontiers'* website?
6. Who is responsible for the decision not to share with us the details of the alleged "overstated claims" in our article and for denying us an opportunity to address any such supposedly "overstated claims"?

Dr. Davelaar, as the Specialty Chief Editor of COPE member journal, I am sure that you realize that dishonesty, manipulation of published records, misrepresentation of an article's history at the journal, keeping editorial allegations secret from authors, and not providing authors with the opportunity to respond to such allegations, is inconsistent with COPE publication ethics and with general principles of honesty and integrity in dealing with scholarly publications.

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I would appreciate your prompt response to these questions. A time window for minimizing further damage to *Frontiers'* reputation is rapidly closing as more and more people are becoming aware of the fact that our published abstract has been removed from *Frontiers in Psychology's* website.

Awaiting your reply,

Dr. Bob Uttl