

Embracing open science as an early-career researcher

Dr William Ngiam

Lecturer at the University of Adelaide

PGR Career Series, University of Warwick

16th February 2025

A brief introduction to me

- **Lecturer** in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide
 - My research is on how we represent information in the mind and brain
 - We can focus on surprisingly little – attention is a precious resource, and so we need to be attending to the right things!
- **An active advocate** for early-career researchers and Open Science
 - I served on the steering committee of *ReproducibiliTea* for three years
- I think **a lot is at stake**
 - I worry about an anti-science society – one where scientific research is no longer considered *credible*
 - I think the Open Science movement has a major role in ensuring science continues so that it can bring positive changes to society

My background

Born in Australia to Malaysian immigrants

Both parents did not have tertiary education

Grew up in a low-income family

Both parents were non-native English speakers

Minority ethnicity



First-generation college graduate

First-generation PhD

First-generation scientist

Recently became a Lecturer (early-career)

International researcher as a postdoc

My goal for this talk is to inspire **you** to **take action and improve science**

- Provide an overview of the reproducibility crisis (from the lens of psychological science)
- Share my journey as an early-career researcher in the Open Science movement
- Convince you that you can lead the movement to bring transparency and rigour to science

Why do we need open science?

The reproducibility crisis / replication crisis

The recent collective concern that many scientific studies **do not replicate**

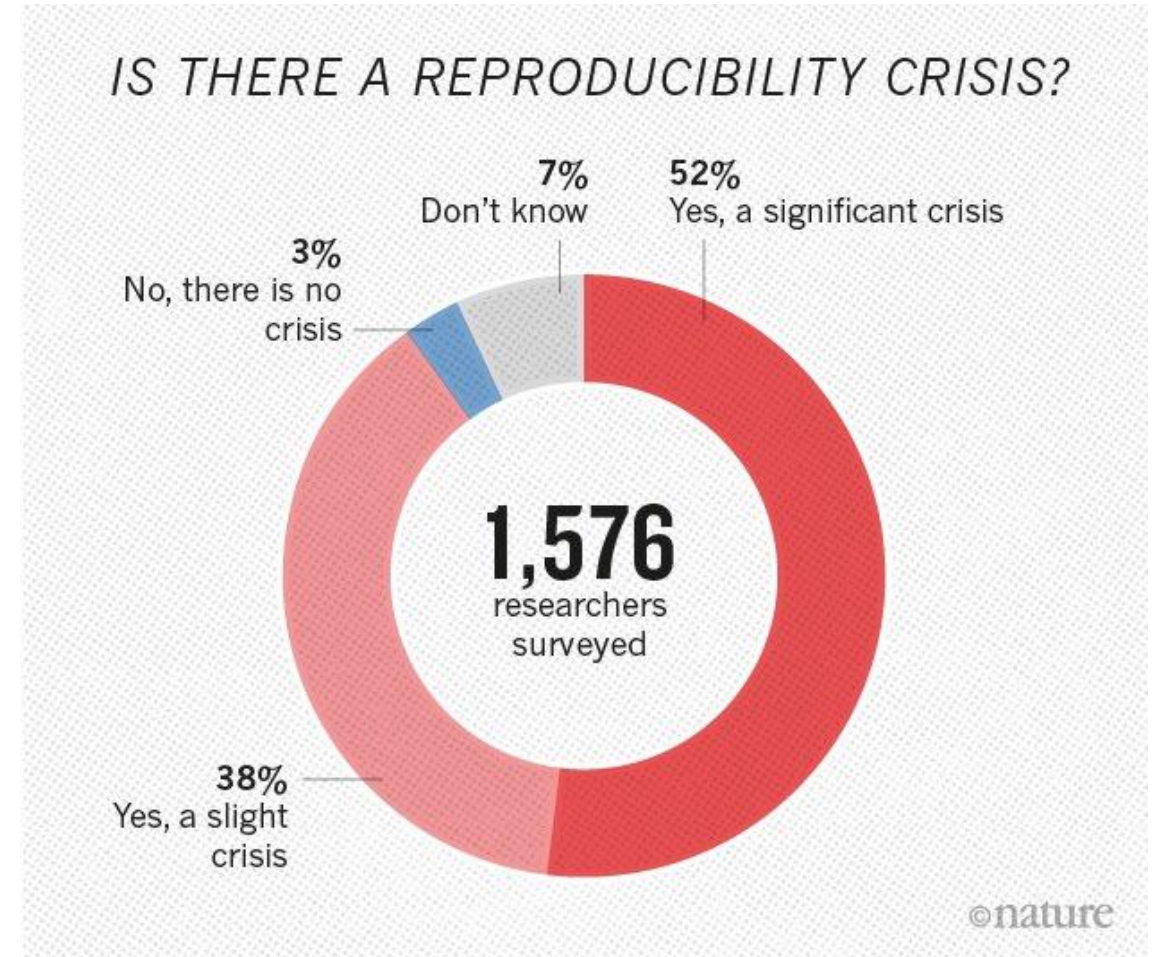


Figure taken from Baker, M. (2016). 1,500 scientists lift the lid on reproducibility. *Nature*, 533(7604).

The reproducibility crisis

- Also known as the **replicability crisis**
 - Sometimes **the generalizability crisis**, or **the methodological crisis**
- The **current** collective concern that many scientific studies are **difficult to reproduce** or **do not replicate**
 - The psychological sciences (and biomedical sciences) have high-profile controversies at the start of the 2010s
 - There have been concerns about the lack of replications in the past!
 - e.g. Paul Meehl, Jacob Cohen and others were sounding the alarm in the 1970s

Notable examples of failed replications

- Priming people with elderly stereotypes leads to slower walking (Bargh, 1996) (almost 6000 citations!)
 - **Multiple failures to replicate**
 - Recent evidence suggesting that any walking speed effect was due to experimenters' expectations of what would happen
- Daryl Bem, a well-known and respected social psychologist and professor at the time, publishes **positive evidence for precognition and premonition**
 - **9** experiments, **1000** participants
 - Standard statistical analyses
 - Published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (a highly prestigious journal) after peer review!
 - A pre-registered replication failed to find any of the reported effects in three attempts (Ritchie, Wiseman and French, 2012)

Failures to replicate in psychology

- **39%** of studies (36 of 97 that had positive findings) published in high-ranking psychology journals replicated (*Reproducibility Project: Psychology*; Open Science Collaboration, 2015)
- **14 of 28** psychology findings replicated with massive sample sizes (*Many Labs 2*; Klein, 2018)
- **3 of 10** psychology findings replicated across many participant pools (*Many Labs 3*; Ebersole et al., 2016)
- **13 of 21** social science experiments in *Nature* and *Science* between 2010 and 2015 replicated (Camerer, et al., 2018)

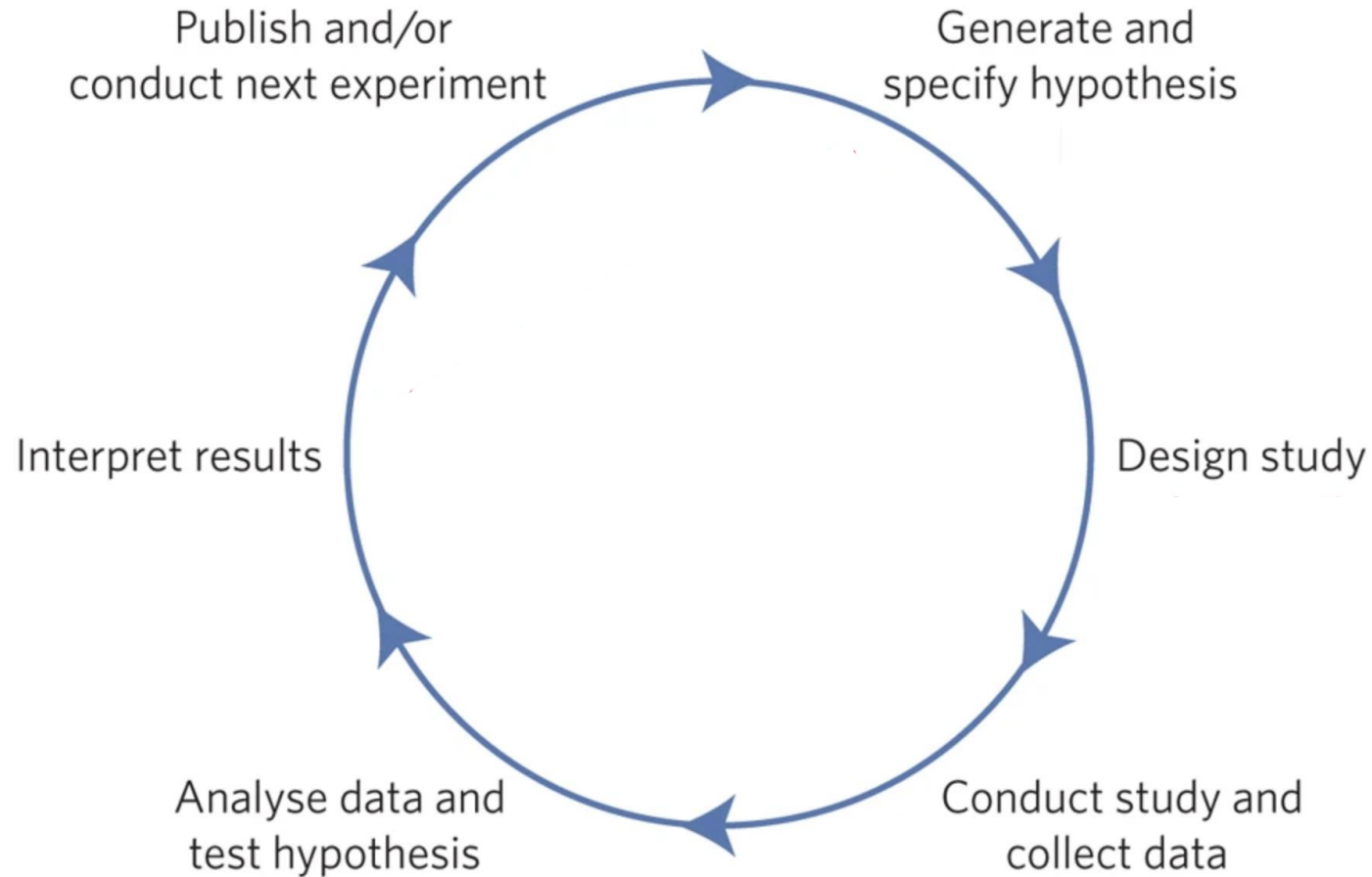
Open Science Collaboration. (2015). Reproducibility Project: Psychology. OSF. doi:10.17605/OSF.IO/EZCUJ

Klein, R. A., Vianello, M., Hasselman, F., Adams, B. G., Adams Jr, R. B., Alper, S., ... & Batra, R. (2018). Many Labs 2: Investigating variation in replicability across samples and settings. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 443-490

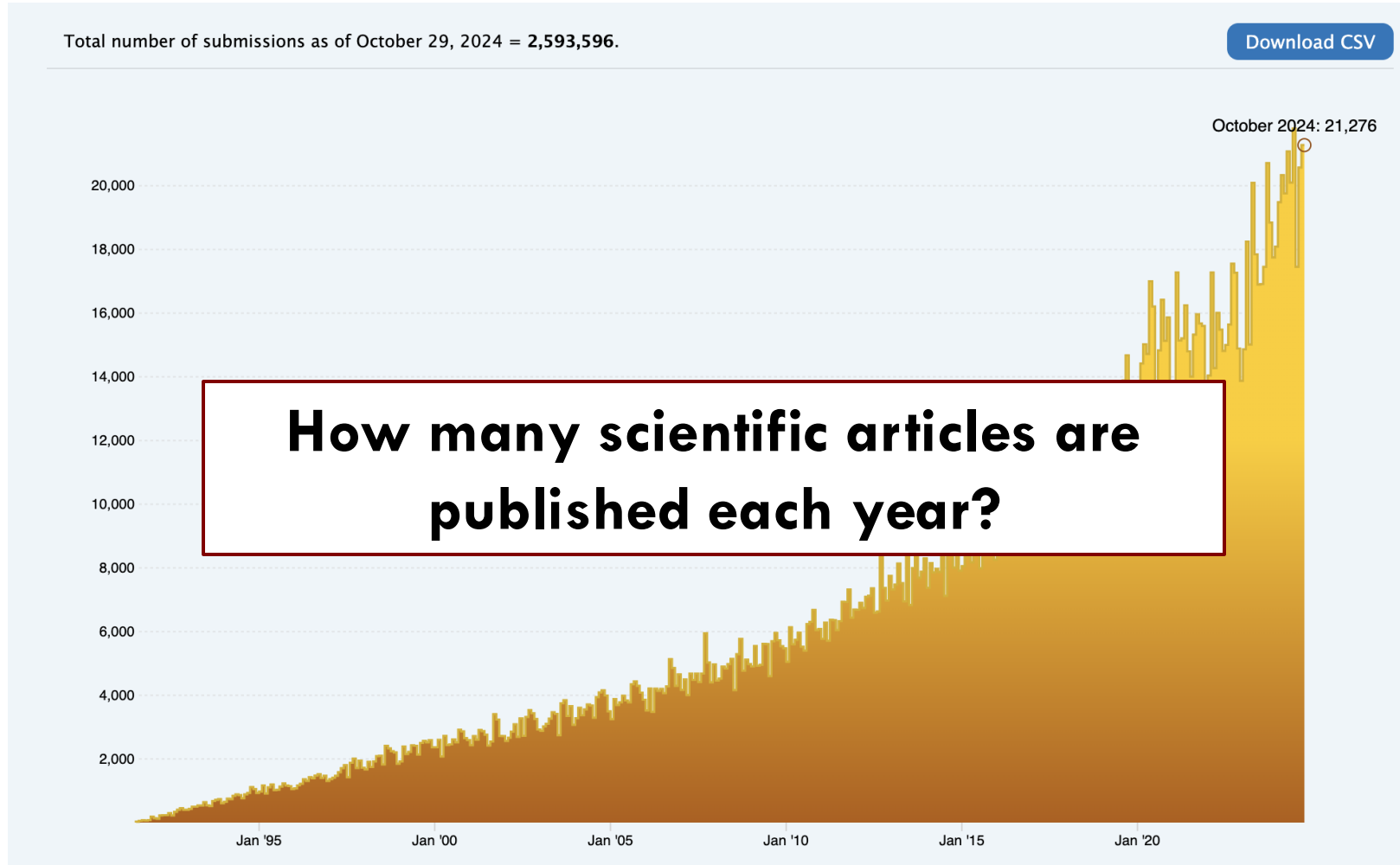
Ebersole, C. R., Atherton, O. E., PhD, Belanger, A. L., Skulborstad, H. M., Allen, J., Banks, J. B., ... Nosek, B. A. (2016, August 17). Many Labs 3: Evaluating participant pool quality across the academic semester via replication. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/q4emc>.

Camerer, C. F., Dreber, A., Holzmeister, F., Ho, T. H., Huber, J., Johannesson, M., ... & Wu, H. (2018). Evaluating the replicability of social science experiments in *Nature* and *Science* between 2010 and 2015. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2(9), 637-644.

Threats to reproducible science



Exponential growth of scientific publications



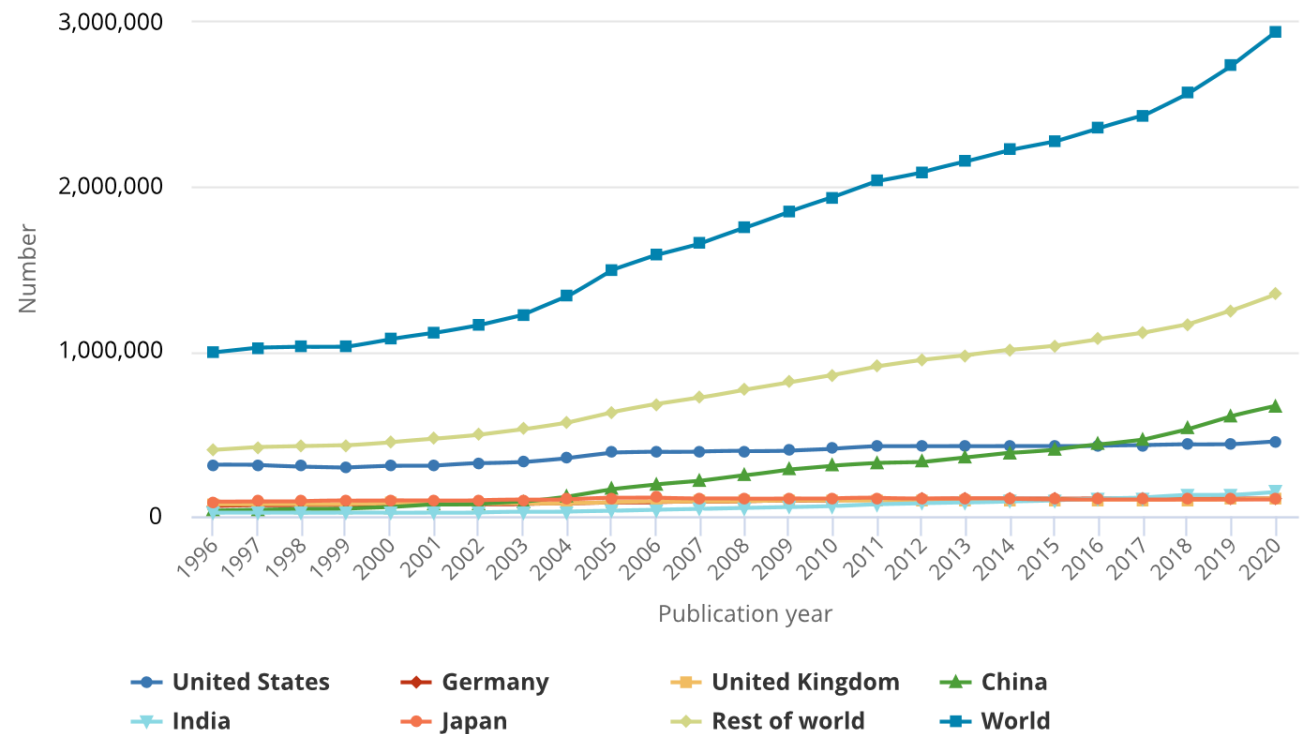
Exponential growth of scientific publications

- Estimated to have reached **2.9 million articles** in **2020** (National Science Board, National Science Foundation)
- Increasing by approximately **4%** each year (Pan, Petersen, Pammolli and Fortunato, 2016)

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics | NSB-2021-4

Figure PBS-2

S&E articles, by selected region, country, or economy and rest of world: 1996–2020



Review by National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. <https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsb20214/publication-output-by-country-region-or-economy-and-scientific-field>

Pan, R. K., Petersen, A. M., Pammolli, F., & Fortunato, S. (2018). The memory of science: Inflation, myopia, and the knowledge network. *Journal of Informetrics*, 12(3), 656-678. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1607.05606>

Is the goal of science just to publish?

2024-8-13

The AI Scientist: Towards Fully Automated Open-Ended Scientific Discovery

Chris Lu^{1,2,*}, Cong Lu^{3,4,*}, Robert Tjarko Lange^{1,*}, Jakob Foerster^{2,†}, Jeff Clune^{3,4,5,†} and David Ha^{1,†}

^{*}Equal Contribution, ¹Sakana AI, ²FLAIR, University of Oxford, ³University of British Columbia, ⁴Vector Institute, ⁵Canada CIFAR AI Chair, [†]Equal Advising

One of the grand challenges of artificial general intelligence is developing agents capable of conducting scientific research and discovering new knowledge. While frontier models have already been used as aids to human scientists, e.g. for brainstorming ideas, writing code, or prediction tasks, they still conduct only a small part of the scientific process. This paper presents the first comprehensive framework for fully *automatic scientific discovery*, enabling frontier large language models (LLMs) to perform research independently and communicate their findings. We introduce THE AI SCIENTIST, which generates novel research ideas, writes code, executes experiments, visualizes results, describes its findings by writing a full scientific paper, and then runs a simulated review process for evaluation. In principle, this process can be repeated to iteratively develop ideas in an open-ended fashion and add them to a growing archive of knowledge, acting like the human scientific community. We demonstrate the versatility of this approach by applying it to three distinct subfields of machine learning: diffusion modeling, transformer-based language modeling, and learning dynamics. Each idea is implemented and developed into a full paper at a meager cost of less than \$15 per paper, illustrating the potential for our framework to democratize research and significantly accelerate scientific progress. To evaluate the generated papers, we design and validate an automated reviewer, which we show achieves near-human performance in evaluating paper scores. THE AI SCIENTIST can produce papers that exceed the acceptance threshold at a top machine learning conference as judged by our automated reviewer. This approach signifies the beginning of a new era in scientific discovery in machine learning: bringing the transformative benefits of AI agents to the *entire* research process of AI itself, and taking us closer to a world where *endless affordable creativity and innovation* can be unleashed on the world's most challenging problems. Our code is open-sourced at <https://github.com/SakanaAI/AI-Scientist>.

My impression is that their attention is misplaced on the incentives, and lacks a considered philosophy of science.

Does producing more papers lead to more knowledge? Solutions to world's problems? Progress in society?



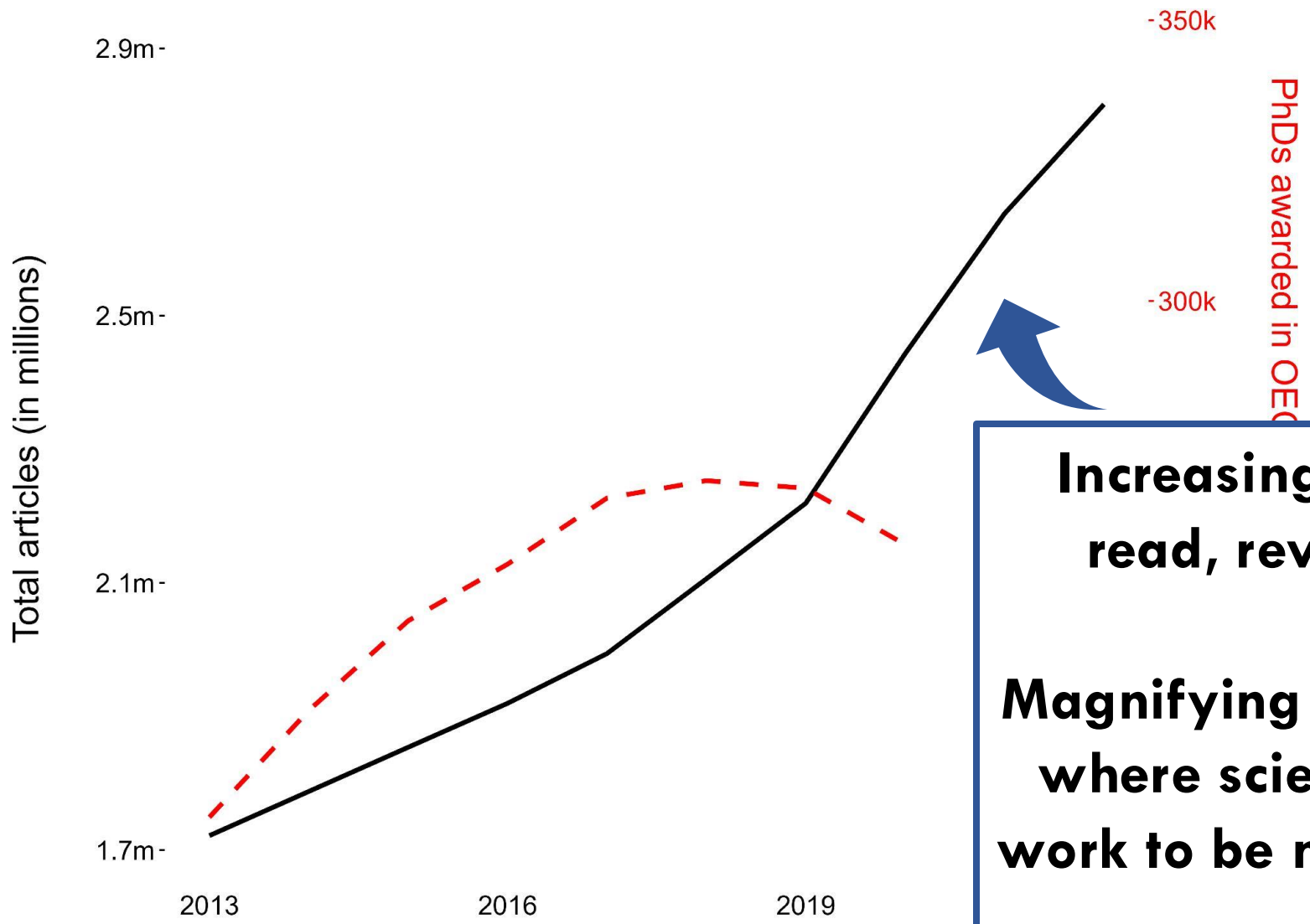
The **decline** of negative results

- The proportion of papers reporting a positive result has been **increasing** from

Does having more papers (mostly with positive findings) mean faster scientific progress?

I say **not really.**

- In the recent psychology literature, this proportion is estimated to be **~95%** (Scheel, Schijen and Lakens, 2021)



Source: N papers -- Scimago website data

Increasing strain on scientists to read, review and co-ordinate.

Magnifying an “attention economy” where scientists compete for their work to be noticed and have impact.

Figure copied from <https://bsky.app/profile/hansonmark.bsky.social/post/3kajeqzv3nt2b>
 Hanson, Barreiro, Crosetto and Brockington (2023). The strain on scientific publishing. *ArXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2309.15884>

What comes at the cost of scientific rigor


Climate warming increases extreme daily wildfire growth risk in California

[Patrick T. Brown](#) , [Holt Hanley](#), [Ankur Mahesh](#), [Colorado Reed](#), [Scott J. Strenfel](#), [Steven J. Davis](#), [Adam K. Kochanski](#) & [Craig B. Clements](#)


[Nature](#) 621, 760–766 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)


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Is this appropriate scientific communication?

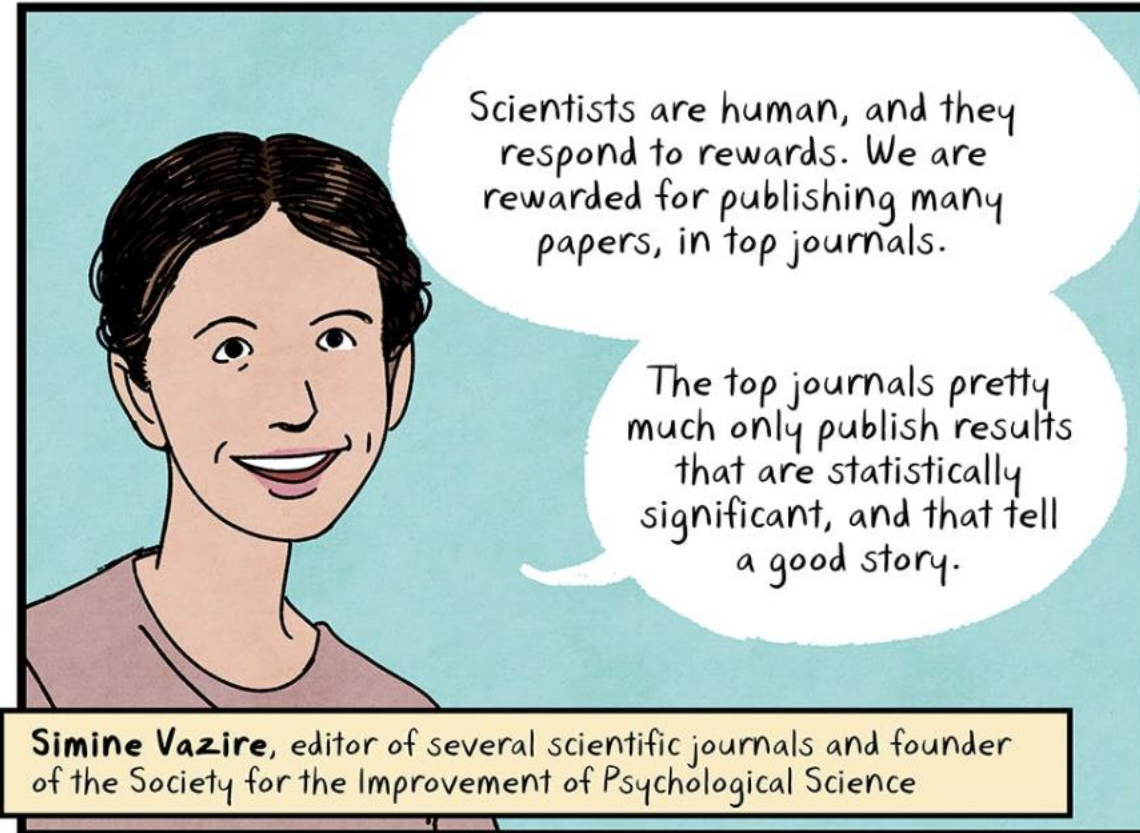


Patrick T. Brown  @PatrickTBrown31 · Sep 5
So why didn't I include these obviously relevant factors in my research from the outset? Why did I focus exclusively on the impact of climate change?
2 10 141 46K

Patrick T. Brown  @PatrickTBrown31 · Sep 5
Well, I wanted the research to get as widely disseminated as possible, and thus I wanted it to be published in a high-impact journal.
4 20 167 47.2K

Patrick T. Brown  @PatrickTBrown31 · Sep 5
To put it bluntly, I sacrificed value added for society in order to mold the presentation of the research to be compatible with the preferred narratives of the editors and reviewers of high-profile journals.
3 43 263 35.8K

Patrick T. Brown  @PatrickTBrown31 · Sep 5
I am bringing these issue to light because I hope that highlighting them will push for reforms that will better align the incentives of researchers with the production of the most useful knowledge for society.
5 23 275 31.3K



Current academic structures have lead to more papers, but with incentives and research assessment being broken, it has not meant more rigorous science.



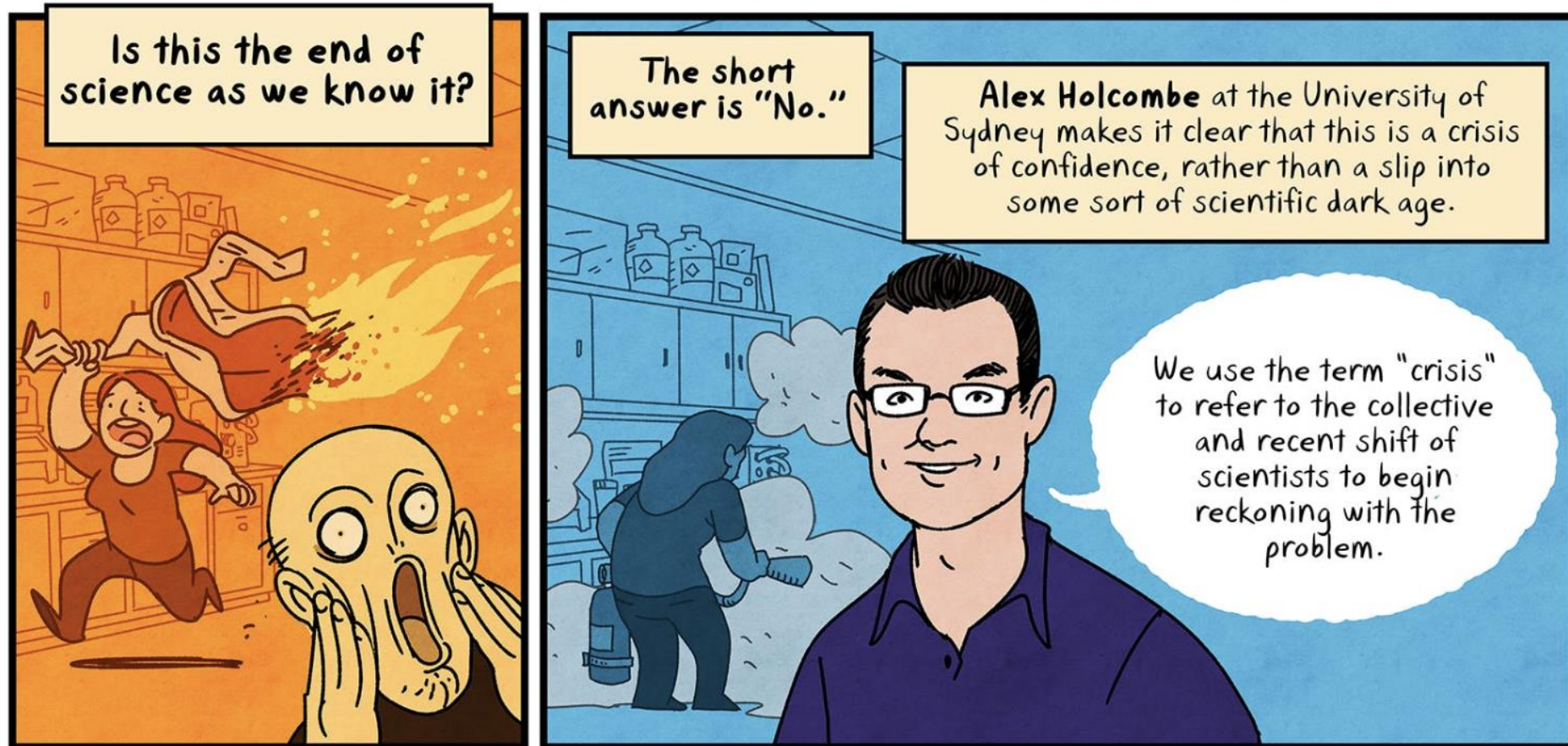
The **Open Science** movement

- “An umbrella term used to refer to the concepts of **openness, transparency, rigor, reproducibility, replicability, and accumulation of knowledge**, which are considered fundamental features of science” (Crüwell et al., 2018)
- A rapidly growing and evolving movement that has had (and continues to have) a long-lasting effect on how science is being done!

My journey in Open Science

My journey in Open Science

- Learnt about **open science** from my PhD supervisor, Alex Holcombe
 - Participated in the *Reproducibility Project: Psychology* as a research assistant



Early-career researchers leading the way with **ReproducibiliTea**



- An initiative founded by early-career researchers in 2018 that now spans 119 institutions across 29 countries
- Creating **open scholarship communities** at research institutions, especially empowering **early-career researchers**



Check out <https://reproducibilitea.org/>

My journey in Open Science

- I got involved with **ReproducibiliTea** a grassroots initiative started by early-career researchers to form Open Science journal clubs at local institutions.
 - Started a journal club chapter at the University of Chicago in my first year as a postdoc
 - Became a steering committee member in the second year of my postdoc and served for three years
 - Started a journal club chapter at the University of Adelaide in my first year as a lecturer

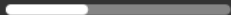




S3E7: Invisible Workload

ReproducibiliTea Podcast

Today, Sarah and Will discuss the invisible workload of making open science. The paper on invisible workload: <https://journal.trialanderror.org/pub/the-invisible-workload/release/1...>

E 21 June 2023 • 37 min 52 sec left 

S3E13: From Crisis To FORRTsitive Change

ReproducibiliTea Podcast


Today, Will sits down with Max Korbmacher, Thomas Rhys Evans, and Flavio Azevedo, some of the authors of the paper "The replication crisis has led to positive structural, procedural,...

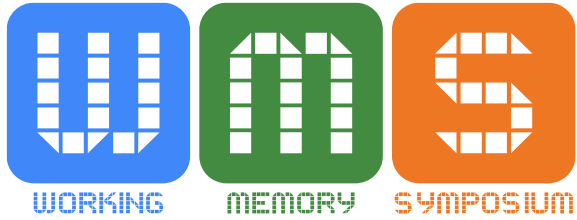
E 1 Sept 2023 • Finished 

S4E1: Reproducibility Training with Repro4Everyone with Nafisa Jadavji and Nele Haelterman

ReproducibiliTea Podcast

We welcome back the ReproducibiliTea Podcast with Will and Helena chatting to Nafisa Jadavji and Nele Haelterman about Reproducibility for Everyone (R4E), a community-led...

E 6 Sept 2024 • Finished 



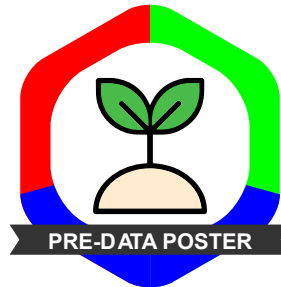
- Organized a free virtual conference for early-career researchers to present their work when in-person conferences shut down due to the pandemic



OPEN SCIENCE: A VISION FOR A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SCIENCE

William X. Q. Ngiam, PH.D.

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Chicago



Pre-Data-Collection Poster Session

2022 Open Science Workshop on Preregistration



Doing Our Part to Change the Culture of Science: Becoming a Champion for Rigor

Organizer/Moderator: Devon Crawford

Speaker: Lique Coolen, Sandra Hewett, Brielle Ferguson, Nafisa Jadavji, Michael Dougherty, Shai Silberberg, William Ngiam

Date & Time: Saturday, November 11, noon–2 p.m.

Location: WCC 207B

Track: Research Skills

Framework for
Open and
Reproducible
Research
Training



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Comment | [Published: 21 February 2022](#)

A community-sourced glossary of open scholarship terms

[Home](#) > [Research Integrity and Peer Review](#) > [Article](#)

A guide for social science journal editors on easing into open science

Commentary | [Open access](#) | Published: 16 February 2024

Volume 9, article number 2, (2024) [Cite this article](#)



[Research Integrity and Peer Review](#)



[Observer](#) > [2022](#) > [January/February](#) > [Fully Credited: Making Publishing More Equitable](#)

FEATURED

Fully Credited: Making Publishing More Equitable

A new model of “contributorship” addresses the marginalization of early-career researchers in scientific publications.

William X.Q. Ngiam

December 29, 2021

[TAGS: APS JOURNALS](#) | [CAREER](#) | [CAREER PATH](#) | [FEATURE](#) | [INCLUSIVITY](#) | [PUBLISHING](#) | [WRITING](#)

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Brain Communications



Volume 6, Issue 3
2024

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Catalyzing communities of research rigour champions

[Audrey C Brumback](#) ✉, [William X Q Ngiam](#), [Dana M Lapato](#), [David B Allison](#), [Christin L Daniels](#), [Michael Dougherty](#), [Haley F Hazlett](#), [Kara L Kerr](#), [Susan Pusek](#), [Melissa L Rethlefsen](#) ... [Show more](#)

Brain Communications, Volume 6, Issue 3, 2024, fcae120,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/braincomms/fcae120>

I am the inaugural *Open Practices Editor* at *Attention, Perception, and Psychophysics*

- I check each submission's open materials – preregistration, open data and open code – checking for ways to enhance their usability

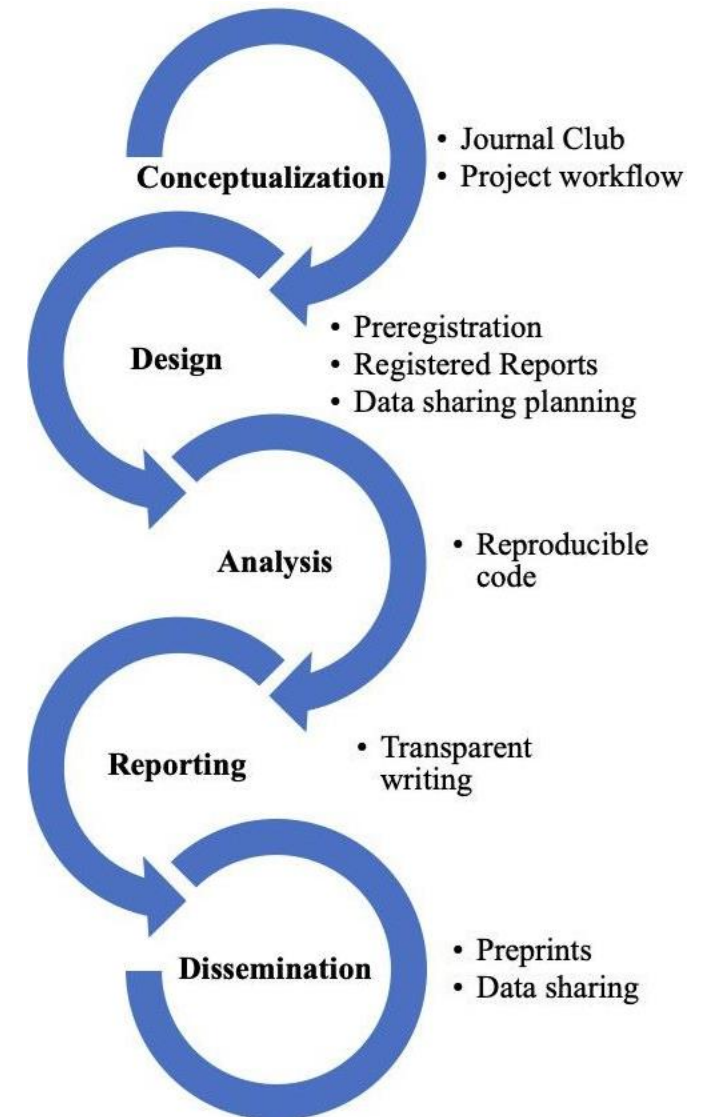
I am building a free-to-use, open-source software for qualitative analysis

- It's called *quokka*, and it works in-browser at <https://palm-lab.github.io/QualCA>
- Most existing software require expensive subscriptions and have fairly clunky interfaces

Benefits of doing Open Science

Where to begin?

- Open Science is not all or nothing – treat it like a “buffet” (coined by Christina Bergmann)
 - These are research skills that take time to develop!
- Some easy Open Science practices to adopt:
 - Open sharing of code, data and research materials
 - More replications and re-analyses
 - Preprints and open access publishing
 - Preregistration and registered reports



Kathawalla, U. K., Silverstein, P., & Syed, M. (2021). Easing into open science: A guide for graduate students and their advisors. *Collabra: Psychology*, 7(1).

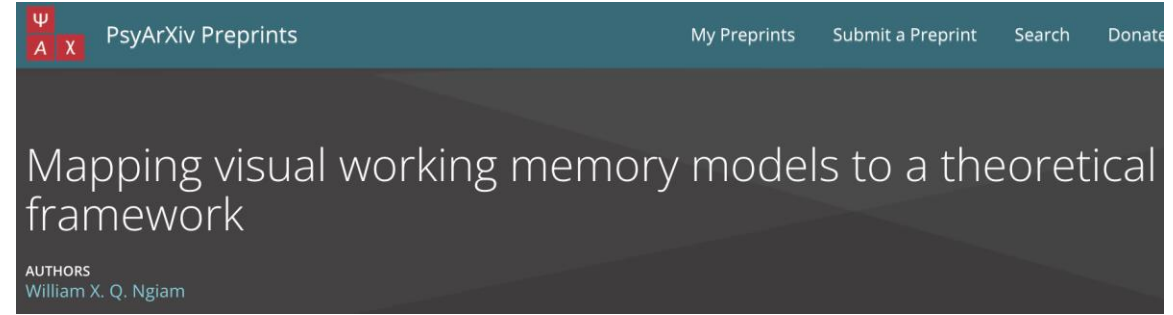
McKiernan, E. C., Bourne, P. E., Brown, C. T., Buck, S., Kenall, A., Lin, J., ... & Yarkoni, T. (2016). Point of view: How open science helps researchers succeed. *elife*, 5, e16800.

Personal **benefits** of Open Science

- **Improve the quality and reliability** of your scientific research
 - For example, preregistrations prompt **theory development**, justifications of sample sizes and analyses, and **statistical power considerations** to protect against researcher bias
- **Increases the impact** of your scientific research
 - Increase reviewers' quality of feedback if they reproduce your results and analyses
 - **Increase citations** from re-analysis and re-use of open datasets
- Can become part of your **academic brand**
 - Increasingly considered in grants and job applications

Estimating the statistical power to detect set-size effects in contralateral delay activity

William X. Q. Ngiam¹ | Kirsten C. S. Adam² | Colin Quirk¹ | Edward K. Vogel¹ | Edward Awh¹



It's not either/or – your goals can include improving science while conducting empirical research.

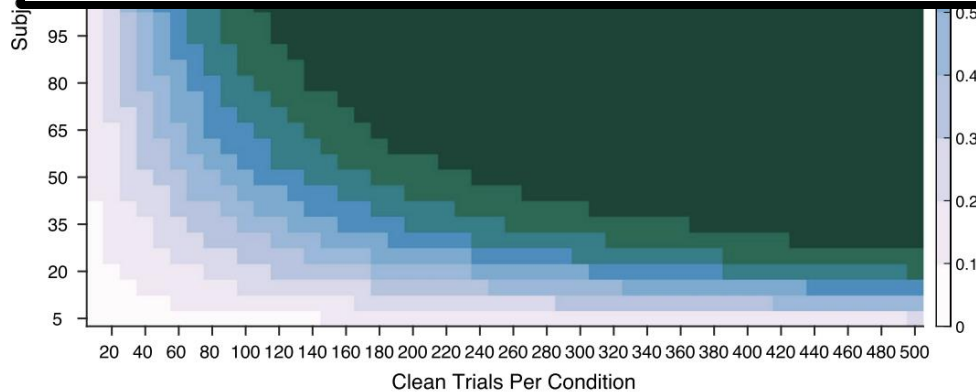


FIGURE 6 Simulated statistical power for observing a significant difference in CDA amplitude between set sizes 2 and 4 beyond the bounds of the Hakim et al. (2019) dataset

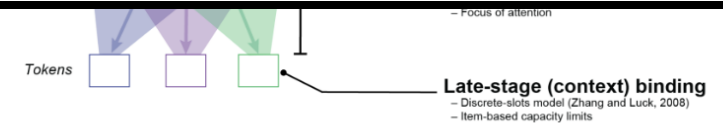
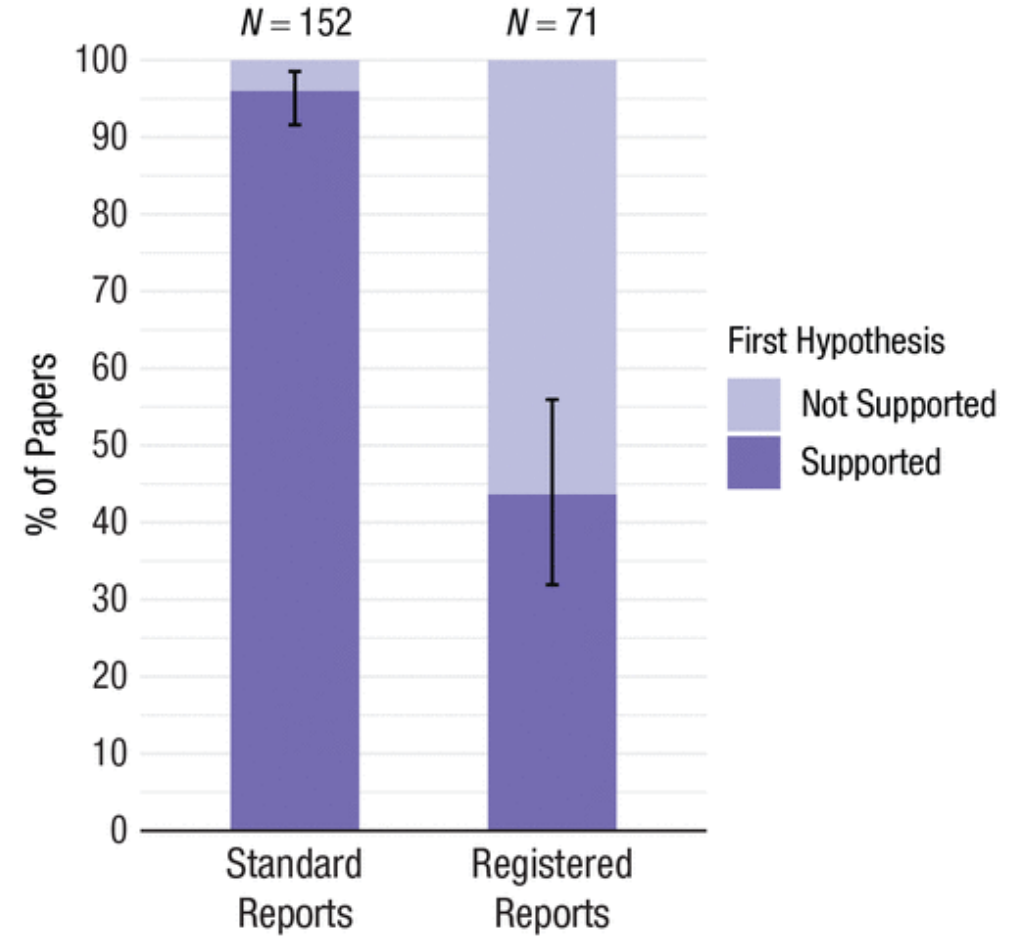


Figure 1. A simplified schematic of the Memory for Latent Representations (MLR) model architecture (Hedayati et al., 2022) with visual working memory phenomena and current models mapped on to its components: the variational autoencoder (VAE), the binding pool, and the tokens. This theory map aims to provide a coherent framework within which to organize visual working memory phenomena and discuss the relevant explanatory models. As such, the compatibility or inconsistencies between models can be better identified, and subsequently tested. For example, one could use a working definition for the noisy representation in VWM as the noise held in the pattern of neuron activity in the binding pool that follows a summation of information from various perceptual sources.

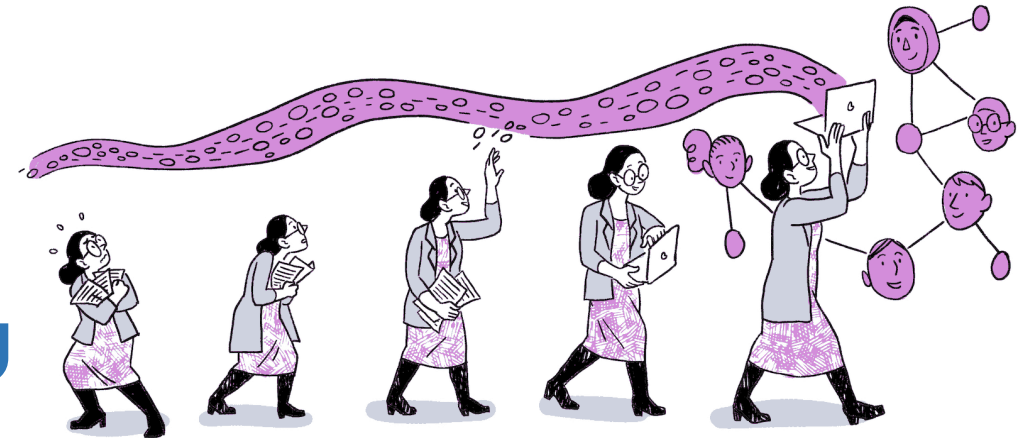
It is working!

- Registered Reports have substantially fewer positive results than the standard literature (Scheel, Schijen and Lakens, 2021)
 - Likely due to a reduction in publication bias and error inflation!



Research rigor needs to
be a priority...

and that starts with **you**



EVOLVING TOWARDS AN
ERA OF
OPEN RESEARCH

Scriberia 

The Turing Way project illustration by Scriberia.

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.3332807](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3332807).

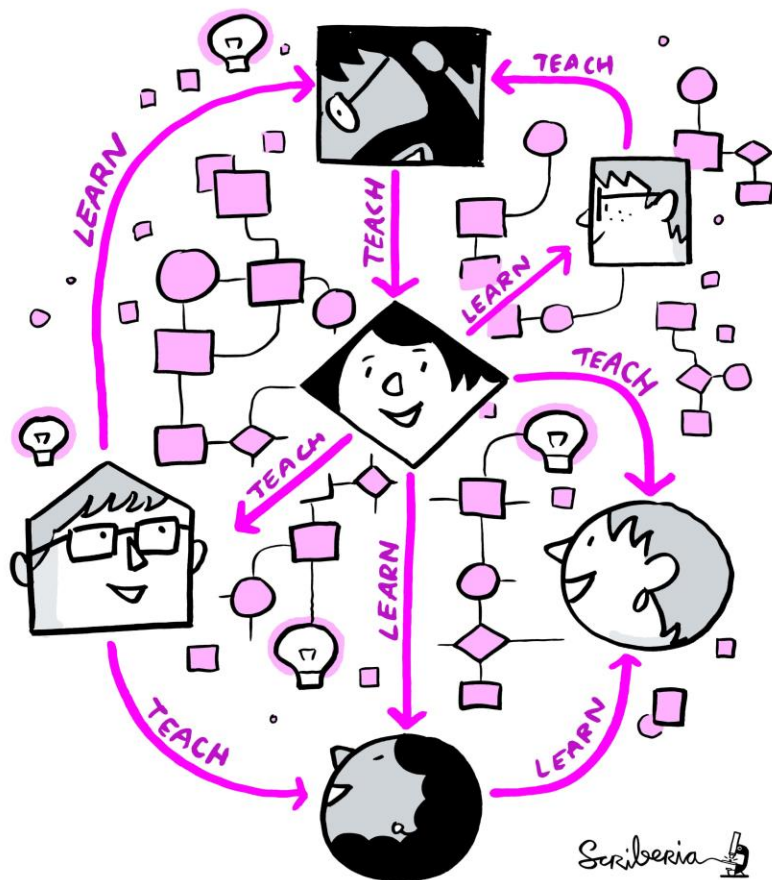


Fig. 1 Modes of change towards scientific credibility. This figure presents an overview of the three modes of change proposed in this article: structural change is often evoked at the institutional level and expressed by new norms and rules; procedural change refers to behaviours and sets of commonly used practices in the research process; community change encompasses how work and collaboration within the scientific community evolves.

Korbmacher, M., Azevedo, F., Pennington, C., Hartmann, H., Pownall, M., Schmidt, K., ... & Evans, T. (2023). The replication crisis has led to positive structural, procedural, and community changes. *Communications Psychology*.

Communication network for sharing, learning and teaching. *The Turing Way* project illustration by Scriberia. Used under a CC-BY 4.0 licence.

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.3332807](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3332807).

The **Open Science** movement

- There are a lot of ideas and initiatives in the reform movement – too many to list:
 - Experiment design/collaboration: *AsPredicted, ManyLabs, Psychological Science Accelerator...*
 - Data and Code: *Open Science Framework, OpenNeuro, BIDS...*
 - Publishing: *The Unjournal, ASAPBio, DORA, CRediT*
 - Education: *FORRT, Repro4Everyone, The Carpentries*
 - Global and National Projects: *OSIRIS, Community4Rigor, ABRIR, UKRN and other national RNs*
- Perhaps not a coherent or cohesive movement in improving science
- Not too many of these initiatives have the **next-generation of scientists** as their direct focus

The credibility revolution in science can only succeed if *we take action together.*

Science is never perfect, but what this crisis has shown is that there is never a shortage of scientists who will keep trying to make it better.

Illustration from Repeat After Me by Maki Naro
<https://thenib.com/repeat-after-me/>

