

An Editorial

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PROBLEMS

In 1974, the American Psychological Association's Publications and Communications Board appointed a committee of personality and social psychologists, chaired by Albert Hastorf, to make recommendations regarding the future of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (JPSP). At that time, problems associated with JPSP's large size, publication lag, and content diversity were apparent. The committee contemplated the possibility of a split of JPSP into two journals but recommended against that idea because of the lack of any consensus on how such a split could be achieved. The committee's recommendations called additionally for (a) taking steps to assure that JPSP's publication lag would not exceed 12 months and (b) most importantly, adopting an editorial organization that would bring the diverse fields covered by JPSP into a unified editorial structure. In accepting the editorship of JPSP, I feel committed to implementing these recommendations. A bit further on in this editorial I describe plans for establishing an editorial organization that can be suitable for personality psychologists as well as for social psychologists, and for researchers in field settings as well as for laboratory researchers.

After accepting the editorship, I reviewed the data available to the Hastorf committee and corresponded with a large number of personality and social psychologists to determine what issues should be covered in an initial statement of policies and procedures. The following exposition is the result of this review and correspondence. It presents a perspective that has benefited greatly from the work of the Hastorf committee and from correspondence with members of JPSP's constituency, but also one that derives from my own previously stated analysis (Greenwald, 1975) of the research-publication process.

The following are the problems I shall seek to deal with at the level of policies and procedures for JPSP.

1. JPSP receives many submissions of manuscripts that make, at most, minor contributions. These manuscripts are eventually rejected, but at substantial cost of editors' and reviewers' time. This input overload indicates a lack of clear and widespread understanding of the criteria that are used to evaluate manuscripts. Some of the changes in policy and operation are intended to clarify and publicize JPSP's evaluative criteria and to encourage authors to undertake more careful self-editing prior to submission.

Editor's note. This editorial reflects the policies of the Editor-Elect of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Anthony G. Greenwald, who becomes editor of this journal in 1977. Manuscripts submitted for publication in JPSP should be directed to Greenwald as of April 1, 1976 and should be prepared according to the policies stated above. Manuscripts submitted before April 1 should continue to be prepared according to current editorial guidelines.

John T. Lanzetta, Editor

2. There may be a crisis in personality and social psychology, associated with the difficulty often experienced by researchers in attempting to replicate published work. A precise statement of the magnitude of this problem cannot be made, since most failures to replicate do not receive public report. Some likely sources of the problem are (a) incompleteness of published accounts of research procedures and (b) use of procedures that may not validly correspond to the concepts in terms of which results are described or interpreted. Some of the changes in policy and operation are intended to assure adequate reporting of procedures and adequate evidence for the validity of procedures in representing the concepts being studied.

3. It seems that most subscribers read very little of JPSP. This can be understood as a reasonable consequence of publishing articles that report technical material of interest only to researchers working in a narrowly defined area. To the extent that it is due to poor writing style, to fractionated publication of research programs that would best be reported in integrated articles, or to lack of articles of general interest, it seems to be an avoidable problem. Some of the changes in policy and operation are intended to provide more incentive to authors to write clearly and interestingly and to report major rather than minor segments of research programs.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

When I first decided to accept the next editorship, I started circulating drafts of new policies, not hesitating to put forward some ideas that I regarded as possibly outlandish. What follows are the remains of those original proposals, much modified by the feedback I received, plus some ideas that were originated by others along the way.

Content of Manuscripts

Since its inception in 1965, the great bulk of JPSP's articles has consisted of reports of original research data. This very high proportion of research studies has been less a consequence of explicit editorial policy than of the rarity of appropriate theory, literature review, commentary, or methodological articles in JPSP's submissions. Although major theoretical articles and literature reviews or methodological articles of general interest are properly submitted to *Psychological Review* and *Psychological Bulletin*, respectively, JPSP is a suitable outlet for manuscripts in these categories that may be too limited in scope for the former two journals.

Submission Process

Manuscripts. Manuscripts are to be submitted in quadruplicate. This will transfer some of the cost of editorial processing to the author, since copies sent by editors to reviewers need not be returned. Copies should be submitted on bond paper, prepared in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2nd ed.). An original typed copy is not necessary if a high-quality reproduction process is used to prepare the submitted copies.

Blind review. Manuscripts will be sent out for review exactly as submitted. The author who wishes blind review should submit three of the four copies, each marked "review copy" and stapled omitting those pages that would normally be separated from the manuscript in obtaining a blind review. (The omitted pages may be fastened to each of these copies with a paper clip.) One copy, including all author-identifiable pages, should be marked "original" and will not be sent out for review. The policy,

therefore, will be to conduct blind review for all manuscripts submitted appropriately, but not otherwise.

Covering letter with submission and required supplementary information. Submitted manuscripts will be reviewed for publication upon receipt of supplementary information in four categories. These categories of information, and their use in the review process, are as follows:

1. A covering letter that indicates the relation (or lack of any relation) of the submitted manuscript to other currently submitted, in press, or recently published papers of the same research program. *Use:* JPSP's editors will be increasing their efforts to avoid piecemeal publication of results of continuing programs of research. These separated publications have high potential for doing a disservice to readers, in that (a) readers are obliged to look to several locations to determine the overall results of a program, (b) excessive journal space is used in the process, and (c) it is all too easy for the authors to ignore or to gloss over inconsistencies in results from one study to the (separately published) next.

2. One copy of each such related paper that is currently submitted, in press, or recently published. *Use:* These copies will be used by the Editor or Topic Editor as an aid to determining the magnitude of independent contribution made by the submitted manuscript.

3. Separately from any report in the manuscript, one copy of a statement of the research procedures in sufficient detail to serve as a guide for conduct of an exact replication of the reported research. *Use:* JPSP does not have page space to permit reporting of studies in full procedural detail. Nonetheless, some details of the sort commonly omitted from published reports (wordings of instructions, wordings of questionnaire items, timing of steps in a procedure, debriefing procedures to determine suspicion, etc.) may be critical either to evaluating the research or to reproducing the results in another setting. It is not intended that this supplementary accounting of procedures serve any function other than being an aid to editorial evaluation. In particular, it is not intended that the Editor's files serve any archival function.

4. Separately from any report in the manuscript, one copy of the summary tables (e.g., correlation tables, analysis of variance summaries) for the *major* analyses reported in the manuscript. *Use:* JPSP does not have the space for routine publication of such summary tables, and authors customarily give only partial presentations of results of their major data analyses. Nonetheless, it is important for the Editor to have available some of the unreported details as an aid to evaluating the manuscript. On occasion, the editor may request that a published article report such analyses in greater detail than described in the original submission.

Editorial Organization

During 1976, decision authority will be distributed among an editorial board of about ten Topic Editors, in addition to the Editor. The unusually large size of this board will assure the opportunity for people with expertise in each of the diverse subfields served by JPSP to participate at a high editorial level. The experience acquired with this interim board during 1976 may permit evolution to a more compact board for the following 5 years.

During 1976, I will screen out manuscripts that can be identified as unsuitable on the basis of a cursory reading and will save for my own decision manuscripts of

general interest. The remainder of submissions will be distributed among the other members of the interim editorial board. Authors will be notified as to this disposition and should expect to receive further correspondence from the editor who has decision authority on the manuscript.

Criteria for Evaluating Manuscripts

A general standard can be stated briefly: Acceptable manuscripts are ones that explain an important question and provide a clear answer to it. The following remarks amplify on this brief statement. The first three criteria apply to all submitted manuscripts.

Importance. Reviewers will be asked to judge manuscripts on importance, and editors will not hesitate to reject technically sound reports when there is a clear judgment that the contribution is minor.

Length. There will be no stated length restrictions other than that manuscripts should be kept to the minimum necessary length. When authors can make an important point briefly, they should.

Quality of writing. Publication preference will be given to manuscripts that are clearly written.

The remaining criteria apply more specifically to research reports.

Conceptual analysis. The introductory section of a manuscript that describes the question to which the report is addressed should be logically tight and should indicate cognizance of the existing relevant literature. Citations of previous literature should be selective. Scholarly reviews of literature should be avoided except when a major aim of the manuscript is to provide such a review.

Methods. Authors should not expect editors or readers to accept on faith the assertion that a given conceptual variable has been reliably and validly measured or manipulated by a given set of operations. Rather, the author should note relevant evidence, such as pilot studies of reliability and validity, prior published reports, or data on subjects' perceptions of procedures. Relevant evidence does *not* include the obtaining of isolated predicted results. However, the simultaneous confirmation of a large set of predictions may provide highly convincing evidence of the appropriateness of operational definitions of concepts.

Data analysis. Articles published in JPSP serve as models of the use of data-analytic techniques. A manuscript should report enough relevant data to make a convincing case for its conclusions and their generality. The reader should be convinced that the reported results can be reproduced (a) using an exact replication of the reported procedures and (b) when a conceptual hypothesis is tested, by means of a replication that uses alternative operations for manipulated or measured variables. Accordingly, authors should often employ designs that incorporate alternative operations, for example, by sampling several sets from a defined population of stimuli or by employing multiple measures of a dependent variable followed by a suitable multivariate analysis procedure.

Informativeness of results. The author and reader of a research report should both feel it possible to make a convincing case that the results of the reported research could have been interesting if they had come out differently from those reported. Publication in JPSP is inappropriate when it is not possible to imagine any reasonable basis for finding results other than the ones reported. (That is, had the results come out differently, most likely the author would have concluded that the research

methods were in some respect faulty.) Such results are uninformative. This is not to say that results consistent with popular intuition are necessarily uninformative. Such results may be informative when there is some theoretical or empirical basis for questioning the popular wisdom. The informativeness criterion is not meant to exclude replication studies, since an author may be able to make the case that there are grounds for substantial doubt about the replicability of some existing finding and, therefore, that replication studies using improved techniques are informative. Further, null findings may often be highly informative (see Greenwald, 1975).

Data, Procedures, and Research Ethics

Submission of a research report to JPSP will be interpreted as an implicit assurance that the author has records of exact procedures and of data in unanalyzed form, and that both of these types of information shall be available to investigators who would like to replicate the research or reanalyze its data, respectively.

The editors shall also assume that questions of research ethics have been handled in keeping with the American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants* (1973), unless stated otherwise in the manuscript. That is, variances from the current accepted practices should be mentioned explicitly. Ethical questions are considered properly by researchers at the time of planning and conducting research, rather than by editors at the time of publishing its results.

When a manuscript is accepted for publication, the author will be asked to provide assurance that (a) the data in unanalyzed form and exact details of procedures will be available to other investigators for at least 5 years after publication and (b) ethical problems have been handled in accordance with the current APA code unless indicated otherwise in the published article.

Publication Order

The editors shall attempt to identify outstanding contributions that are worthy of special recognition in the form of featured publication as the lead article(s) of an issue. Beyond this, an energetic attempt will be made to have related articles appear contiguously in the journal in order to simplify use of the journal by its readers. This may mean minor advances in publication of some articles and delays in others. The goal of the editorial staff will be, nonetheless, to publish all manuscripts within 12 months of receipt, excepting delays that are author caused.

SUGGESTIONS ¹

Preparation of Research Reports

Authors should be guided by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2nd ed.) on matters of style. The editors will be concerned with clarity and conciseness of writing style and will be predisposed to reject manuscripts that (a) do not set forth clearly their conceptualization and aims in the abstract and first two pages or (b) are written at length greater than necessary for the con-

¹ More detailed suggestions regarding preparation of research reports may be obtained by writing to the Editor-elect, Anthony G. Greenwald, Ohio State University, 404C West 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

tent of the paper. Authors are further encouraged to conclude manuscripts with a brief section headed "Conclusions," to which the reader might go directly for a résumé of conceptual or empirical advances.

The author should consider that the reader processes sections of the manuscript in a sequence consisting perhaps of title, abstract, introduction, conclusion, method, results, and discussion, in that order. It is to be expected that relatively few readers will complete this sequence and many may stop after only the first one or two items. In recognition of this, authors should make the abstract, introduction, and conclusion sections as self-contained and coherent as possible.

Diffusion of Editorial Function

Perhaps the single major source of problems in the functioning of JPSP in recent years has been the large and increasing rate of manuscript submissions. In the last several years, 80–90% of manuscripts have been rejected, and despite increased page allocations, it has not been possible to keep the publication lag to a tolerable 12-month maximum. Unless this trend changes, JPSP's editorial operation will continue to show the ill symptoms of this excessive intake. In addition to lengthy publication lag, the symptoms of editorial indigestion include excessive reviewing turnaround time, high rejection rate, absorption into the system (publication) of occasional items that should have been rejected, and corresponding occasional erroneous rejections. The best solution would be a moderation of diet but, unfortunately, the menu is not directly under the editors' control. For this reason, I earnestly solicit the involvement of the JPSP constituency in a broad and informal editorial organization that goes well beyond the one listed on the journal's masthead. In this informal editorial network, potential authors and their colleagues play important roles.

Author's role. The decision to submit a manuscript is made by an author. Authors can ask themselves how they evaluate their own manuscript on the standards that will be employed by editors, but this is only the beginning. Because authors decide not only when to submit but also what to submit, they serve a gatekeeping function that has potential for misuse by allowing published results to be a faulty sample of the data most appropriate to investigating a research question. The author should be particularly cautious of two practices that can be damaging to the orderly testing of hypotheses: (a) selective presentation of results that are favorable to the author's preferred hypothesis and (b) selection, through pretesting, of research procedures on the basis that they produce desired results rather than that they are most suitable to the hypothesis being tested.

Colleague's role. One cannot expect authors to be fully objective in evaluating their own manuscripts. Rather, they may profitably seek the advice of colleagues whose standards they respect, preferably colleagues who have had experience with the journal editorial process (as reviewers or authors).

There is good reason to be concerned about the relative disadvantage in access to expert colleagues suffered by those who have the least publication experience. I would like therefore to encourage established contributors to JPSP to feel a special obligation to provide presubmission advice to nonestablished authors. Without this sort of informal cooperation among colleagues, the relative novice is at a substantial disadvantage before the editorial process. Needless to say, it is to be hoped that the

publication novice will not feel timid about seeking presubmission comments from more veteran authors.

The colleague who is called upon to provide a presubmission review will provide the greatest service if such informal reviews are conducted in the fashion of formal editorial reviews—that is, with major concern for candid and objective evaluation of the manuscript, even if at some cost to the feelings of the author. The author, in turn, should be prepared to accept the advice of those whom he or she asks to provide a presubmission opinion, even though this will often mean further writing or further data collection before submission.

Function of informal editorial network. Manuscripts that have survived several presubmission reviews are likely to receive relatively favorable evaluations in the course of JPSP's more formal review, for a variety of obvious reasons. More importantly, the final published product should bear a quality that is proportional to the number of critical readings received on the way to print.

CONCLUSION

JPSP and I owe a debt of gratitude to the many people who have responded to various proposals for changes in JPSP. The good will toward JPSP that has been evident in all this will, I hope, be reflected in a spirit of cooperation with the new policies and procedures. If the policies are effective, JPSP's number of submissions and its production lag should be reduced during the next few years, and the rate of acceptance of manuscripts should increase as a consequence of higher quality of submissions. If these consequences fail to materialize, I shall have occasion to consult again with JPSP's friends.

REFERENCE

- Greenwald, A. G. Consequences of prejudice against the null hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 1975, 82, 1-20.

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