

Editorial: Is the Work as Good as It Could Be?

When I became an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1998, I was quickly impressed by the high level of quality and dedication that was expressed by the editorial team and the editorial board in each and every aspect of the management and production of the *Journal*. When I became the Incoming Editor in 2002, I realized that I was the fortunate benefactor of a long history of excellence in the publication of the *Journal*. Going back just the past five editors (space precludes going further, yet the contributions of earlier editors are equally impressive), the *Journal* is what it is today because of the hard work of Joanna Williams, Samuel Ball, Robert Calfee, Joel Levin, and Michael Pressley. My Associate Editors and I will continue to maintain the course; we will continue the high level of quality of publications in the *Journal*, continue to encourage scholars to submit their best work to the *Journal*, maintain a timely and quality review process, and maintain the scope and purpose of the *Journal*. Further, we will continue the commitment to publishing high-quality work that has the potential to move the field forward in important empirical and conceptual directions, including work that moves the field in new directions.

This does not mean, however, that some things will not change. In the early 1990s, Michael Pressley and I had a series of discussions on a question that was a recurring concern for both of us: Is the work as good as it could be? Although we were focused primarily on educational intervention research and our discussions with other scholars on this question led to a special issue of *Educational Psychology Review* (Pressley & Harris, 1994), this question has become foundational to my work with the *Journal* as well. This is the overriding question for myself and my editorial team, not only when we are reading work that is promising for publication in the *Journal*, but also when we consider the work we are doing to produce the best possible research journal in educational psychology.

The quality of educational psychology research improves as the research base grows and as our methods and understandings become more sophisticated and advanced; standards for the *Journal* evolve along with these improvements. My Associate Editors, editorial board members, and I will continue to strive with our authors to be sure that the work is indeed as good as it can be. First, we are attending to what we find is one of the most striking problems in many studies submitted to the *Journal*, the lack of adequate subject description. Adequate description of subjects is critical to the science and practice of educational psychology; this allows readers to assess the results, determine generalizability of findings, and make comparisons in replications, extensions, literature reviews, or secondary data analyses. Authors should see guidelines for sample–subject description in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition), but in some cases may need to consider going beyond these minimum standards (cf. Rosenberg et al., 1992). Work submitted to the *Journal* that does not meet at least the APA standards will guarantee a need for revisions; lack of such critical information may preclude publication.

Second, my team and I are also committed to ensuring that research reported in the *Journal* includes adequate evidence that the measures used are reliable and valid. This requires not only referencing previous evidence, but reporting appropriate reliability indices for the measures used in the present study in many cases, as we know that reliability is not a characteristic of a measure, but rather of a sample (Crocker & Algina, 1986; Kieffer, Reese, & Thompson, 2001; Thompson, 2003). Third, failure to report effect sizes or strength of relationship is common among manuscripts submitted to the *Journal*; appropriate indices of effect size or strength of relationship need to be incorporated in the results section of the manuscript and placed in practical and theoretical context in the discussion section (cf. Kieffer et al., 2001, and the *APA Publication Manual*). Information that allows the reader to assess not only the significance, but also the magnitude of the observed effects or relationships, clarifies the importance of the findings.

We are also committed to communicating to the field our strong interest in publishing research of the highest quality across multiple methods, including qualitative, quantitative, and single-subject designs. Further, we seek to publish conceptual and review (theoretical, methodological, and integrative) articles that make critical and leading contributions to the field. In addition, we seek to influence future work in the field in at least two ways. The first is to encourage educational psychologists to continue to move their research beyond the laboratory and laboratory-like settings. When research needs dictate more laboratory-like conditions, it should be remembered that laboratory tasks and analogue or contrived situations can provide an important and valuable basis for further research and valid data for those conditions (Harris, 1988). Such laboratory or laboratory-like investigations should, however, be seen as only the first stage in a program of research. Discontinuity between laboratory and field should be reduced in successive stages of research to avoid invalid generalizations due to distinctive features of the laboratory setting.

Second, we find Sternberg's (2002) arguments for the need to provide explicit training in the review process to doctoral students involved in research compelling. Such training is critical for doctoral students, not only as a component of their research preparation, but also as a part of their socialization into the review process, APA, and the field of educational psychology. Thus, editorial board members may invite a student with the appropriate level of training and expertise to review a manuscript they receive, as long as the student is fully informed of the confidentiality of the manuscript and APA expectations for reviewers, the board member supervises the student review and also completes his or her own review, and the student review is clearly labeled as such. All reviews are, of course, advisory to the action editor, who makes the decision regarding the submission.

I am pleased to announce an exciting new development for our field, one that will also positively influence future research in our field. APA can now place supplementary material (such as audio or video clips, detailed intervention protocols, or supplemental databases) online, linked to the published article in the PsycARTICLES database. The printed article will include in the author note a statement to the effect of "Supplemental material for this article is available in the PsycARTICLES database [URL]." Although the number of articles that may include such a link to supplemental materials is limited at this time, authors of selected articles will be asked to work with the action editor and production staff to provide supplementary materials as appropriate. Another new development is the Journal Back Office (JBO), which APA has developed to facilitate electronic submission of both manuscripts and reviews. Beginning in January 2004, authors will be required to submit an electronic copy of the manuscript to the *Journal*, along with four paper copies to the *Journal* office; reviewers will submit their reviews electronically to the JBO rather than emailing them to the *Journal*.

In closing, I want to thank my Associate Editors for 2002, Eric Anderman, Linda Baker, Frank Pajares, Michael Pressley, and Steven Yussen, for their dedication and hard work. Michael Pressley and Steven Yussen have stepped down for 2003 because of other commitments; we are joined this year by Andrew Biemiller and CarolAnne Kardash, outstanding additions to our team. I also want to thank our editorial board members and ad hoc reviewers for the phenomenal and all-too-often unrecognized work they do for us and the field—without you we truly could not do this job. I invite readers who are committed to the future of educational psychology and who have published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* or a comparable journal to contact me if they are interested in reviewing for us.—Karen R. Harris, Editor

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