

## EDITORIAL

### Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Attitudes and Social Cognition

I am honored to assume the role of Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Attitudes and Social Cognition (JPSP: ASC)*. Throughout my career, I've always thought about social and personality psychology as a nexus point for some of the most exciting and expansive ideas in psychology. From its inception in the early 20th century, the field has examined how the social world shapes psychological processes. I would argue that the idea that the mind is exquisitely tuned to our social contexts is an insight we should be proud of. It is also the one that is relevant not only to those of us who identify as "social-personality psychologists," but to society at large as well. Although the significance and promise of our field are solid, it has become increasingly clear that it also faces a number of important challenges, most notably the issue of replicability (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). Although people vary (often dramatically) in their views on the nature and extent of this issue, that we have an issue to address is something that I think most scholars would agree on. Fortunately, I believe there are ways of overcoming this diminished morale while simultaneously enhancing the quality (and replicability) of our work. I view achieving these goals as one of my most important responsibilities as Editor of *JPSP: ASC*. I intend to see to it that *JPSP: ASC* functions as a beacon for the active, field-wide effort toward the constructive, future-oriented, positive transformation of the discipline. It is my hope that engaging in these efforts will return our community to a place that young talent willingly and safely bets their futures on. It is with this sense of mission that I feel honored to serve in this role over the next five years. As Editor, I would like to address the current challenges by actively promoting three principles: rigor, innovation, and inclusiveness.

#### Rigor

Sustaining the scientific rigor in *JPSP* is my top priority. Traditionally, *JPSP: ASC* has attracted articles reporting programmatic research on key aspects of social behavior, cognition, emotion, and motivation. The typical article is a multistudy package that as a whole reveals a fairly complete picture of the basic effect, as well as its moderators and mediators. I have confidence in this traditional mode of research, and *JPSP: ASC* will continue to be an outlet for its publication. However, one downside of this tradition must be recognized. Specifically, it has often been the case that each individual study in such multistudy packages is underpowered, which raises a host of well-documented concerns (Francis, 2012). We will implement three initiatives to address these concerns.

First, we must place a greater emphasis on the robust demonstration of a key effect in a given project. This will require the use of an adequately powered design, which often requires larger sample sizes. Importantly, however, because any study is idiosyncratic, there is no simple and single rule to apply in identifying the sample size that is required to achieve sufficient power. It depends greatly on the type of the methods (e.g., self-report vs. nonintrusive behavioral measures vs. fMRI), the hypotheses under investigation, between- versus within-subject designs, and additional design features that could afford a test of generality across stimulus materials. Above all, it depends crucially on the fidelity of the methods *as executed* – how carefully the protocol is prepared and crafted, how detailed the protocol is, how faithfully it is followed and enacted by the experimenter(s), among many other considerations.

I thus believe that the field needs to establish some way of assuring the fidelity of the procedure as executed. I will therefore encourage that all authors make available online a discussion of procedural details that includes (a) the protocol used to run the study, (b) the extent of training given to research assistants/confederates (so that others can repeat it), (c) the measures taken to maintain high quality in the execution of the procedure as

detailed in the protocol, and (d) any additional procedural nuances that are considered crucial for performing the study.

Second, the authors should provide a clear, carefully crafted rationale(s) for the target  $N$  for each study. It bears emphasis that certain statistical formalities including power analysis may be part of this rationale and, in fact, we encourage the use of these tools whenever doing so is reasonable. However, all studies, even those that could appear to be close replications, may not be exactly identical (Van Bavel, Mende-Siedlecki, Brady, & Reinero, 2016). For example, subjects can be systematically different (e.g., sophomores in a midwestern university vs. graduating seniors at an Ivy-league school vs. people in other countries) in ways that are sometimes hard to predict (Corker, Donnellan, Kim, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2015). Hence, the power analysis or any other statistical formalities are seen as one way among many to justify the target  $N$ . The only requirement is that the rationale behind the  $N$  is carefully thought out and constructed.

Third, there needs to be general grounding of research projects on a broader theoretical framework(s), as well as a thoughtful delineation of the continuity of an idea discussed in a given paper from its predecessors. This point relates to an observation that over the last decade or so, there has been a growing tendency toward the publication of studies that appear surprising, unusual, counterintuitive, and tweet-ready. In Bayesian terms, valid prior theoretical knowledge behind a specific hypothesis increases the prior probability of the hypothesis to be true. Hence, the deliberate effort to utilize prior theories in guiding current research endeavors may be an effective (although often neglected) means for addressing the apparent proliferation of sexy findings that do not replicate (Fiedler, in press). Moreover, grounding current endeavors on prior theoretical knowledge contributes to the continuous growth of collectively shared knowledge. Thus, I will work to ensure that *JPSP*: *ASC* values the advancement of systematic theories in Personality and Social Psychology—incremental gains in knowledge will be rewarded as long as they are solid and move theories forward. Only by grounding our findings in large, commonly shared theoretical frameworks will we be able to expect cumulative growth of knowledge in the field. I would therefore like to see a section of the paper address the theory(ies) that gave rise to the study and how the current work extends or challenges such theories.

### Innovation

Although *JPSP* has a solid reputation as the best journal in the field, it also is quite conservative in both methods and style. A typical package includes the demonstration of a basic effect and the subsequent identification of both moderators and mediators for the effect. In fact, in my conversation with graduate students from multiple institutions, it is very clear that they are aware of a “*JPSP* formula” and use it to maximize the chance of publishing their papers. Because this formula requires multiple studies—often as many as five or six, the researchers actively avoid any labor-intensive and/or expensive methods. There is no surprise that most articles published in *JPSP* use traditional methods of either self-report (e.g., attitude rating or ratings of attraction or motivation) or computer-mediated response collection (e.g., reaction time (RT) or implicit association test).

We need to appreciate and positively sanction innovative methods that are increasingly important in social and behavioral sciences (Greenwald, 2012). These methods include neuroimaging, genetic or epigenetic analysis, and other biomarkers, as well as network analyses, approaches with “big data,” and ecologically valid online assessment of cognitions, behaviors, and certain biomarkers. Although I value the traditional *JPSP* style as a vehicle for providing readers with a substantial intellectual journey to be highlighted in the journal, the field may risk being left behind by the rest of the social and behavioral sciences that actively capitalizes on the innovative methods not only in social and behavioral sciences but also in biology, neuroscience, and genetics.

To address this issue, we will create a new category, “Innovations in Social Psychology.” Under this category, we will consider theory-driven papers that use methods that are novel and cutting-edge including, but not limited, to biological methods such as neuroimaging and assessment of biomarkers as well as network analyses and creative use of “big data.” Papers submitted under this category will be reviewed with decision criteria consistent with the top journals in the relevant areas of investigation rather than the ones that are traditionally more common in *JPSP*. Among others, I will explicitly welcome shorter, single-study manuscripts under this category. These papers will be handled in an expedited fashion. *To be competitive, such papers must be superb in ideas and theory-driven, utilize innovative methods, and, importantly, the study that is reported must be sufficiently powered.* I ask authors to explain why they believe their papers to be considered under this category in a cover letter, much like they would when submitting similar papers to other topflight journals (e.g., *Science*, *Nature*, *PNAS*).

### Inclusiveness/Diversity

As a field, social and personality psychologists have long relied, somewhat uncritically, on undergraduates at research universities in North America and Western Europe as research subjects. These students tend to be rich, well educated, mostly Western in cultural orientation, and politically liberal. This particular population, however, could be rather peculiar and literally “W.E.I.R.D.” from a worldwide perspective (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Moreover, even within this relatively homogenous group, people may vary widely across subpopulations. For example, regions in the United States may pose significant influences in certain social psychological domains (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Ethnic and racial diversities are potentially important as sources of social psychological variation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), as are social class (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007), gender (Wood & Eagly, 2002), religion (Li et al., 2012; Norenzayan et al., 2016), and generation (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012). How can we, as a field, especially a field grounded in the idea that the social context shapes behavior, dismiss this diversity as no more than an error variance that simply obscures whatever the real effect might be?

I believe that the time is ripe to call for a change. As Editor, I will weigh the inclusiveness of subject populations more seriously. Ultimately, I believe that this intentional expansion of the subject base—not only in size but also in diversity—in our science is the best step toward addressing the challenges we face today. I therefore ask every paper to offer a candid discussion of the extent of generality of the findings under consideration as well as the potential limit thereof (Simons, Shoda, & Lindsay, 2016).

Such a discussion may provide an impetus toward self-conscious efforts toward greater diversity in study populations. Perhaps some effects may be expected to be relatively unique to certain populations at issue (e.g., upper-middle class youth living in a big city). Alternatively, some other effects may be expected to be more general at least within college-educated populations, or in modern market economies, or perhaps in Western societies. These considerations may suggest a new way to test this discussion by using different sample(s). If the same effects occur in a sample that is very different from the original one, this will constitute a “big plus” that could bring the paper above the threshold for publication in *JPSP: ASC*. Likewise, demonstrating that an effect does not generalize across samples for theory-guided reasons would also be considered a strength. At a minimum, a careful analysis of the relevant social contexts is required. Depending on the amount of contribution the work has established before this extension of the findings in a new sample, subsequent follow-up studies that test this analysis may not be required in the same paper. I believe that the resulting sense of open-endedness in an otherwise solid empirical piece, caused by an apparent effect of sociocultural contexts, should be regarded as a positive contribution to our science rather than as a liability of the study that could cost a rejection verdict at the journal.

### What’s New in *JPSP: ASC*?

To realize the values of scientific rigor, innovation, and inclusiveness/diversity, I institute the following four changes. I refer all authors to my detailed discussion of each point provided above.

1. Authors must provide a *broad discussion on how they sought to maximize power*. This discussion should include, but not be limited, to sample size. It may refer, for example, to improvement of measures, manipulation checks, and treatment of stimuli as a random factor. A relevant segment of the paper must be highlighted in yellow. In addition, authors are encouraged to submit an online supplementary document (called “Supplementary Procedure”) that includes materials, as discussed above, that are crucial in guaranteeing the fidelity of the study as executed.
2. Authors must also provide a thoughtful discussion on their samples with an emphasis on their *diversity and inclusiveness*, or the absence thereof. This discussion must include the generality assumed for a key finding(s) under discussion, as well as possible limits thereof. A relevant segment must be highlighted in light blue.
3. There must be a thoughtful discussion of how the reported study or set of studies contributes to *cumulative theoretical knowledge in psychology*. This discussion may involve, but needs not to be limited to, an explication of how the study (or studies) builds on and extends, or challenges, commonly accepted theoretical frameworks in our field. A relevant segment must be highlighted in light green.
4. We strongly welcome theory-driven papers that utilize novel methods (e.g., biological methods, neuroscience, large-scale social psychological interventions, social network analyses, “big data”

approaches). Single-study manuscripts are welcome, as long as they make important theoretical contributions to social psychology with innovative methods, and the study is sufficiently powered. These papers may be processed under a new category of “*Innovations in Social Psychology*” and are likely to be much shorter than papers traditionally published in *JPSP*. These papers are potentially handled in an expedited fashion. Authors who wish their papers to be considered under this category must indicate their desire and justify it in their cover letters. Papers that are rejected under this category cannot be submitted again to any of the sections of *JPSP*, including *JPSP: ASC*.

### In Closing

I believe that this is an opportune time to be a social psychologist. Clearly, our field is in the midst of several challenges. But if we know how to handle them, they do not have to be threatening. To the contrary, we can *move forward* and grow by responding positively and constructively to these challenges. It is therefore my great pleasure and privilege to have the opportunity to lead *JPSP: ASC* to the future. The renewed emphasis on the values of rigor, innovation, and inclusiveness/diversity as explicated above will be instrumental in promoting a better science of human social behavior. And by emphasizing the three values, *JPSP: ASC* will positively contribute to the constructive transformation of our field, help address the current challenges, and make the field more resilient, expansive, and relevant than ever before. I look forward to receiving the best papers from each of you!

—Shinobu Kitayama, Incoming Editor

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