

EDITORIAL

Inaugural Editorial

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The glory of science is, that it is freeing the soul—breaking the mental manacles—getting the brain out of bondage—giving courage to thought—filling the world with mercy, justice, and joy.

—Robert G. Ingersoll, Humboldt from *The Gods and Other Lectures*

I am honored and excited to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as editor of the *Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes (IRGP)* section of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP)*. I am tremendously fortunate to share this stewardship with an amazingly energetic and talented group of associate editors: Professors Stephen Garcia, Omri Gillath, Jennifer Kubota, Jackson Lu, James McNulty, Francesca Righetti, and Jacquie Vorauer (the associate editors) and Professors Jessica Flake, Marcello Gallucci, and Pablo Sayans Jiménez (the methods and statistics associate editors).

Relationships, whether between friends, romantic partners, parents and children, coworkers, ingroups, outgroups, communities, or cultural groups, constitute the essential fabric of human existence. The way we feel, think, and behave depends on the relationships we actually have, and the relationships we imagine we have, with others. These relationships are hugely varied—they include those closest to us (e.g., spouses, children, parents, friends) and those farther from us (e.g., neighbors, ingroup and outgroup members, celebrities, societal leaders, broader institutions, and global communities). These relationships are also incredibly important—they can impact our physical and psychological health for better or worse and even our risk of death.

Submissions to *JPSP-IRGP* should significantly advance our understanding of how these various social relationships function. Ideally, submissions should (a) offer new theoretical insights into real-world social problems, (b) identify mechanisms that explain why such problems exist and whether they might disproportionately affect particular people, and then (c) use convergent research methods, both inside and outside the lab, to answer these questions. Because the power of our models rests on research that represents the breadth of human experiences, we also hope that submissions will offer an increased understanding of how interpersonal relationships and intergroup relations function across diverse geographic and sociocultural contexts.

JPSP-IRGP has long been our field's premier outlet. The rich history of scholarship that fills the pages of *JPSP-IRGP* well warrants its reputation as our premier journal. This rich history also explains why so many of us treat *JPSP* as an aspirational standard. Aspiring to do and publish our very best science is an unqualified good, and *JPSP* fills an important role in helping to set the standards that guide our field. However, when any journal is held out as aspirational, it risks creating the expectation that submissions need to be unassailable to breathe that rarefied air.

The expectation of "unassailability" creates problems for the journal and our field. It can cause reviewers to discount articles that could make a real contribution because the studies/data have limitations or inconsistencies. It can dissuade authors from submitting work they are really excited about because they fear the studies/data are not "the right kind of data" for *JPSP*. And it can cause authors to pile online study upon online study in an effort to craft "perfect enough," but often, impenetrable articles. And this expectation probably explains why *JPSP-IRGP* is not filling all the pages it has available.

Consequently, our team is actively working to increase submissions, increase acceptances, and make the articles we ultimately publish more accessible, widening readership. Our submission and review guidelines for this section capture our commitment to these goals.

Submission Guidelines

We would like authors to put the innovativeness and generativity of their ideas first in deciding whether to submit their work for consideration at *JPSP-IRGP*. We hope authors will submit the articles that test the hypotheses that they are most excited about—articles that should push theoretical boundaries and address real-world problems. We would also encourage authors to prioritize submissions that use more than one method, hopefully including methods that are grounded in real-world processes. I would personally hope to see authors moving away from testing hypotheses only through vignette-based studies with online samples. Used sparingly, such studies can be valuable, but people are not always the most reliable informants of their behavior. Moreover, interpersonal and intergroup relationships are complex and dynamic entities that necessarily involve more than one person, so researchers are going to need to get in the weeds and do at least some of their studies in real-world, messy contexts to truly understand them.

The guidelines that follow reflect my team's twin intentions to make submitting articles to *JPSP* a more attainable goal and then make the articles that are ultimately published more accessible.

1. Submissions can report *a maximum of five studies* in the article text. Any studies conducted to test the study

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hypotheses that are not reported in the article must be reported in the supplemental materials, with their results summarized briefly in the article text. The reports of any such studies in the supplemental document should be complete, with the main measures of interest (those overlapping with measures reported in the main text) and associated results reported first, followed by a listing of any additional measures collected.

2. Introductory and discussion sections are limited to *no more than 5,000 words* in total (including general and study-specific introductions and discussions).
3. Results sections are to be written to be accessible to readers with general statistical expertise, relying on figures and explanatory text to communicate the findings and relegating more complex and detailed justification of the statistical methods to tables, notes, and/or supplemental materials. Authors are to prioritize integrative analyses across data sets and/or meta-analyses whenever possible, also including the main measures of interest from any studies reported only in the supplemental materials.
4. A focused discussion of salient alternative explanations for the reported findings should be included. Such discussions may involve questions of construct validity (e.g., an alternative meaning of a manipulation/measure), alternative/additional mechanisms or mediators, alternative causal models, and so forth. Whenever possible, authors should describe how the reported study design/data can be used to address such alternatives and/or the type of study design/data needed to address such alternatives in the future. Details about analyses conducted to rule out alternative explanations can be provided in the main text or online supplemental materials. Alternative explanations can be raised/addressed in the discussion text and/or tables.
5. Acknowledge (a) points of theoretical connection/disconnection to related theories and (b) how readily the findings may generalize to nonstudied populations.
6. Embed tables and figures in the article text. Information provided in tables will not count toward the word limit.
7. Any online supplemental materials must include a table of contents.

Review Guidelines

In evaluating submissions, we would like reviewers to consider theoretical innovation and the adequacy and difficulty of the hypothesis tests. That is, we recognize that more rigorous (e.g., experiment vs. correlational study), behavioral, and time-intensive methodologies may yield compelling conclusions with fewer studies and that sample sizes for especially hard-to-get populations may be smaller. We also recognize, and we will encourage reviewers to similarly recognize, that articles can make innovative theoretical contributions without addressing every alternative or mechanism and that nonsignificant/anomalous effects can arise even when the overall support for the hypotheses is robust. In short, we hope

reviewers will hold high, but attainable, standards, recognizing that we need to publish the best of the articles we *receive*.

To make the process more transparent and less onerous for reviewers and authors alike, we also build on the sound procedures our illustrious predecessors put in place to strive to provide an efficient and clear-cut process from submission to decision.

First, we will triage articles that are limited in theoretical scope and/or provide manifestly unpersuasive support for the hypotheses. This means articles that reach reviewers will fall within roughly the top 50% of articles submitted to the journal. Given the pages that are allotted to the journal, reviewers will be told that we hope to eventually accept roughly 30% of the articles that go out for review. It is our hope that making the rigor of the triage process explicit will put reviewers in the best mindset to identify articles that could ultimately be suited for the journal, even if they are not currently ready for immediate publication.

Second, we have introduced a branched review process that we hope will streamline the process of writing a review. *JPSP-IRGP* articles need to reach a high bar for theoretical innovation. So, as a first step, reviewers are asked to identify whether the article's *underlying ideas* capture their interest/imagination for their high potential to make such an innovative/generative contribution to the literature. To the best of their ability, reviewers are asked to make this innovation judgment independent of their evaluation of the strength of the studies/data.

Submissions can make innovative theoretical contributions in multiple ways (adapted from *JPSP-Attitudes and Social Cognition*), including but not limited to (a) developing a new theory and offering evidence to support it, (b) using an existing theory to explain a new phenomenon, (c) making novel connections between two theories to address new questions, (d) using an existing theory to integrate previously unconnected phenomena, (e) providing a new mechanistic explanation for established phenomena, (f) conceptualizing moderators that explain conflicting predictions in the literature or help us understand the conditions under which an established phenomenon occurs, (g) introducing new elements to a theory that failed to explain a phenomenon, (h) introducing a new theoretical construct and demonstrating its importance, and (i) examining an existing/new theory or phenomenon in an understudied population.

If the answer to this theoretical "innovation" question is no, reviewers can devote most of their review to explaining why the article falls short of the bar for *JPSP-IRGP* consideration and hopefully point to ways in which the authors could refine/strengthen the theoretical questions posed. As a further help to the authors, we would also ask reviewers to comment on any *major* methodological limitations the authors should also consider.

However, if the answer to this "innovation" question is *yes or probably yes*, reviewers should then evaluate the persuasiveness/sufficiency of the theoretical justification and studies/data. That is, we would ask reviewers to (a) identify the article's strengths and (b) categorize its limitations as central or peripheral. *Central* limitations are ones the authors *must* address for the studies/data to be interpretable (e.g., incorrect analyses, confounds, missing literature, unclear justifications). *Peripheral limitations* are ones that the authors *could* address to make already compelling studies/data unassailable, providing the proverbial icing on an already well-executed cake. We will also ask reviewers to categorize *central* limitations as likely

(a) addressable through the existing data/studies or (b) addressable only through new studies/data. These categorizations will inform the action editor's decision making.

Third, we will be willing to extend "accept with revision" invitations on the first round of reviews should reviewers identify the article as sufficiently innovative and having no central limitations. We will extend revise and resubmit invitations only when central limitations can likely be addressed using the existing studies/data (including measures referenced in supplemental files). We will reject articles that require new studies/data to address central limitations. Authors can submit articles with new studies/data that remedy central limitations in rejected submissions. However, any such submission would be treated as a *new* submission.

Fourth, whenever possible, the action editor will render decisions about revised articles without soliciting further/new reviews. If the

editor needs additional consultation, such consultation will generally be sought from the most appropriate of the original reviewers.

JPSP-IRGP has a long history of publishing innovative and exciting research; we hope to uphold the exemplary stewardship the journal has received to date. We are moving forward with these goals and procedures with the hope of further strengthening this section as a premier outlet for our science and increasing its accessibility and reach. As we navigate our new responsibilities, we will make course corrections as needed to best highlight our science.

We welcome the field's submissions to the journal, and we are eager to share the tremendous scholarship we collectively produce.

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