

EDITORIAL

Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology: Past, Present, and Future

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Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology (SEPP), the official journal of Division 47 (Society for Sport, Exercise & Performance Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA), is now in its sixth year of publication. Jeff Martin, the first Editor, has done a fantastic job in establishing SEPP as one of the leading journals in the field of sport, exercise, and performance psychology. It has been a great honor to be selected by Division 47 and APA as the second Editor of SEPP. As per APA policy, in my first year (2016), I was Incoming Editor, handling all new submissions; 2017 marks my first year as Editor. In this Editorial, I reflect on our accomplishments in the year that passed, discuss the current status of SEPP, and share my vision for the future.

Accomplishments in 2016

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of SEPP in 2016 is the extremely short submission-to-first-decision lag maintained throughout the year. Specifically, for all manuscripts sent out for review in 2016, we communicated the first decision to the authors, on average, in 26 days! For desk-rejected manuscripts, we sent the first decision, on average, in 2 days. For this impressive editorial lag—as well as for their contribution to the other achievements outlined below—I would like to sincerely thank Daniel Gucciardi, Diane Mack, and Brett Smith, who serve SEPP as Associate Editors (AEs). They have all worked tirelessly throughout the entire year to handle assigned manuscripts and complete the review process of every manuscript quickly, without compromising its quality. I would also like to thank our superb Editorial Board (EB), and the large number of ad hoc reviewers, who submitted excellent reviews within three weeks, making it possible to achieve our goal of completing a quality review process in such a short period.

A second highlight of 2016 was that SEPP received its first Impact Factor (IF). Although I am well aware that this metric is imperfect, I am also aware that it is one of the metrics used to evaluate journal quality and to guide authors' decisions of where to submit their work. The current IF of SEPP is 1.756 and represents a remarkable achievement, given that this is its first IF. Of course, credit for this accomplishment is due to Jeff Martin, the outgoing Editor.

We also continued the Outstanding Paper of the Year award, which is now sponsored by the Society for Sport, Exercise & Performance Psychology; I would like to thank the Society for sponsoring this award. The aim of the award is to recognize high quality research, and it is given annually to the first author of a

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paper, published in that calendar year. It consists of free registration to the annual APA conference, allocated space at the conference for the first author to present the paper, and a certificate; in addition, the paper appears as one of the sample papers on the journal website. The criteria for this award are innovation, methodological rigor, data analysis, significance of the issue, and quality of writing. In 2016, the paper selected for this award is entitled “Changing Minds: Bounded Rationality and Heuristic Processes in Exercise-Related Judgments and Choices” by Zachary Zenko, Panteleimon Ekkekakis, and Georgios Kavetsos (Zenko, Ekkekakis, & Kavetsos, 2016). In two well-designed experiments, these researchers showed that important motivational variables (e.g., affective attitude, intention, exercise choices) can be manipulated by targeting specific heuristics (simplified “rules of thumb”) and that the “bounded” nature of human rationality is evident in exercise judgments and decisions. Congratulations to Zachary Zenko and his team for this fantastic achievement.

We have also continued the important initiative of Jeff Martin, who introduced the Outstanding Reviewer of the Year award. This award is a small token of appreciation for the efforts of individuals, who have gone the extra mile to support the journal. The criteria used for this award in 2016 were number, quality, and speed of submitted reviews, as well as reviewer commitment to the journal; for example, by agreeing to do more than one review within a short timeframe. The recipients of this award in 2016 are Meghan McDonough (University of Calgary) and Chris Englert (University of Bern). I would like to thank both of them for their outstanding service to the journal.

The year 2016 also saw the announcement of a special issue on sport concussion. Anthony Kontos from the University of Pittsburgh, Past-President of Division 47, has agreed to be Guest Editor of this special issue, and the intention is to publish it in 2017. The journal also had its first special issue on parenting in sport, edited by Chris Harwood and Camilla Knight (Harwood & Knight, 2016). This issue includes some excellent articles. For example, see the article entitled “Educating and Supporting Tennis Parents: A Grounded Theory of Parents’ Needs During Childhood and Early Adolescence” by Thrower, Harwood, and Spray (2016).

Finally, 2016 saw a massive increase in the number of manuscripts submitted to the journal. Submissions had been relatively stable between 2013 and 2015 ranging from 115 to 131. In 2016, the number of submitted manuscripts reached 203, surpassing our expectations for the growth the journal can achieve in a single year. There was also an increase in the rejection rate, which reached 88% this past year. Thus, we ensured that only manuscripts that meet our high standards were accepted for publication.

Current Status of SEPP

The large number of submissions in the year that passed suggests that SEPP is becoming the “journal of choice” for many researchers to submit their work, and is quickly establishing itself as one of the leading journals in the field of sport, exercise and performance psychology. I expect that the low editorial lag, the quality of the review process, the high IF, and the awards we have established, will further accelerate the growth of SEPP. As a result, I have appointed two new Associate Editors, who will be invaluable in the years to come in serving our fast-growing journal: Sarah Ullrich-French, from Washington State University (U.S.A.), and Antonis Hatzigeorgiadis, from the University of Thessaly (Greece) have agreed to take on this important role from January 2017. They bring in additional expertise, which will complement the expertise of the current AEs. I

welcome Sarah and Antonis to our editorial team and look forward to working with both of them.

There were also changes to the 2017 EB. Seven excellent scholars have agreed to join the EB: Vassilis Barkoukis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece); Chris Englert, University of Bern (Switzerland); Kent Kowalski, University of Saskatchewan (Canada); Eleanor Qusted, Curtin University (Australia); Chris Ring, University of Birmingham (U.K.); Tatiana Ryba, University of Jyväskylä (Finland); and Raoul Oudejans, Free University (the Netherlands). The current SEPP EB consists of 42 consulting editors. Mark Wilson, Steven Petruzzello, and Jane Sheldon served the journal well in 2016, but will be missed from the 2017 EB. I thank them all for their service to the journal.

Presently, the journal enjoys high reputation. Given its relatively young age, the journal has done extremely well in attracting high quality research. Based on its IF, SEPP is ranked 11th of 44 journals in the hospitality, leisure, sport, and tourism category and 30th of 79 journals in the applied psychology category. When compared with other journals publishing sport and exercise psychology research, based on the 2015 IF, SEPP is currently ranked third after *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* and *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*. However, the short editorial lag and the low acceptance rate place it near the top of most categories of its competitor journals.

Vision for the Future

My aim is to make SEPP the journal that attracts the best research in the field of sport, exercise, and performance psychology, that is, work that is innovative, asks important questions, is conducted with high methodological rigor, employs advanced and appropriate statistical analyses, has theoretical and practical implications, and is communicated clearly. I would like to see studies that introduce new constructs, examine research questions using new methodologies, and challenge our ways of thinking. I would also like to see the journal act as a forum for intellectual debate. One of the ways I plan to do this is by introducing “target articles” that challenge traditional approaches to a phenomenon, and inviting scholars who represent different theoretical approaches to respond with a critical commentary to these articles.

In line with our achievements in the year that passed, I intend to maintain a short editorial lag ensuring that authors receive the first decision (once their manuscript is sent for review) within five weeks from the submission date. Similarly, the decision to not send a manuscript for review will be communicated to the authors within a few days, with a brief explanation of the reasons for this decision. Importantly, I aim to maintain a high quality review process by soliciting for each manuscript two or three reviews that are thoughtful, offer critical feedback in a constructive manner, and are supported with references to the relevant literature. Even if their manuscript is rejected, authors submitting their work to SEPP can count on a fair, fast, and constructive review process.

In my term as Editor, I am committed to further enhance the quality of articles submitted to SEPP. I would like to encourage submissions that examine research questions in two or three studies, use large samples, aim to shed light on previous equivocal findings, test moderation and/or mediation hypotheses, use different methods and ecologically valid tasks, are theory based, and use objective measures. I would also like to see more manuscripts that report well-designed experiments, randomized controlled trials, mixed-methods designs, longitudinal designs, and meta-analyses. Qualitative studies are welcome, and authors are

encouraged to use different methods: for example, visual methods, digital methods, and conversational analysis.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight two reports published in SEPP that exemplify some of the features of excellent research mentioned above. The first is by Beattie, Woodman, Fakehy, and Dempsey (2016). These researchers conducted three experiments (using car racing and golf-putting tasks) aiming to resolve the long-standing controversy about the direction of the within-person relationship between self-efficacy and performance and found that performance feedback moderates this relationship. The second is by Phillips, Chamberland, Hekler, Abrams, and Eisenberg (2016), who investigated the different processes through which intrinsic rewards predict exercise for initiators and maintainers. In two studies, these authors showed that intrinsic rewards predict exercise via habit strength for maintainers but via behavioral intentions for initiators; the prospective design, the large sample size, and the objective measures of physical activity are important features of this research.

In the spirit of strengthening the work submitted to SEPP, I would like to offer some guidelines for future submissions to the journal. First, for experimental studies that report null findings, it is important to determine whether the experiment had sufficient power to detect an effect; thus, reporting *a priori* power calculations is essential (see Cohen, 1992; Dienes, 2014). Second, authors need to adhere to the revised APA Standards (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014) for educational and psychological testing when they use psychological instruments. Third, authors need to be aware of the long-standing criticisms of null hypothesis significance testing (e.g., Cohen, 1994) and supplement *p* values with confidence intervals and effect sizes. Please see the recent statement on *p* values published by the American Statistical Association (Wasserstein & Lazar, 2016). Fourth, authors are advised to use “checklists” to guide them with the conduct and reporting of statistical analyses such as Bayesian statistics (Depaoli & van de Schoot, 2015).

Finally, I would like to see more diverse submissions in the area of performance psychology. Although sport is a performance domain, and there is some overlap between sport and performance psychology, motor skills—which underpin performance in sport—are essential in other performance domains. Some examples are the performing arts (e.g., dance, music), surgery, fire-fighting, and military operations. The defining feature of “performance” in the domains that are relevant to this journal is that performance involves motor skills. For example, examining performance in a golf-putting task is relevant to SEPP, whereas performance in solving puzzles or public speaking is not. Diverse submissions in performance psychology are needed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, SEPP has done extremely well, given its young age, on a variety of fronts. I would like to thank Jeff Martin for his exceptional leadership during the early years of the journal and for placing SEPP on strong and solid foundations. I consider myself lucky to continue Jeff’s excellent work. Daniel, Diane, and Brett contribute to the development of SEPP in a number of important ways beyond handling manuscripts. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication and insights and for assisting the journal to continue its upward trajectory. Thanks also are extended to the EB and guest reviewers, who so generously offer their time and knowledge to the journal as well as to the APA staff: Sharon Ramos, the Manuscript Coordinator; Annie Hill, the Managing Director; and

Cara Bevington, the Journal Production Manager, have been extremely helpful. Last, but not least, I would like to thank Division 47, and, in particular, Anthony Kontos, for its continuous support and for sponsoring the Outstanding Paper of the Year award. Thank you all for the opportunity to embark together on this journey of strengthening SEPP's position as a leading journal in the field of sport, exercise, and performance psychology.

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