

January 1, 2018: The new Editorial team starts accepting new manuscripts at the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. The Editor-in-Chief, Anirban Mukhopadhyay, has two previous years of experience.

January 31, 2018: The new Editors on the team, Priya Raghubir (Research Reports), and Christian Wheeler (Research Articles), begin to wonder why they had ever said “Yes.” The shared sentiment is, “*This job is relentless!*”

June 30, 2019: The three co-editors celebrate the half-way point which begets the classic question: Is our term half-empty or is it half-full?

August 31, 2020: The team is counting down: Four months to go. We discuss the experience. What have we gotten from it? What costs have we borne? Has it been worth it?

Editorial roles naturally promote introspection regarding the nature and purpose of service to the field. Why did we devote three years of our lives, twenty hours every week, to journal service? This editorial is a result of that introspection and those discussions. We have two goals. Primarily, we wish to thank the members of our JCP community for the roles they have played – be they *ad hoc* reviewer, Editorial Review Board member, or Associate Editor – appreciating the costs they have undertaken. Our taking on the job as Editors made us keenly aware of their sacrifices. Without their timely, insightful, and constructive feedback to authors, exemplifying the positive aspects of the review process, the journal would be very different indeed.

This dedication is all the more impressive given recent events. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the early part of 2020 saw many established routines and processes upended. People

everywhere, academics included, scrambled to deal with changes to their personal and professional lives, and the anxiety brought about by uncertainty. Possibly because the one thing people retained some control over was their research, the first half of 2020 saw an unprecedented peak in the number of new submissions – a 20% increase year on year. Amazingly, JCP review quality and timeliness both held firm, despite the increase in workloads and the fact that our AEs and reviewers were experiencing the same disruptions, uncertainty, and anxiety. The Journal and our authors thank you.

The second, and related, purpose of this editorial is to encourage those of you who are considering starting or increasing your service to journals to make an “eyes wide open” decision. We lay out what we have learned about the costs and benefits of journal service for you to appreciate what it takes to make a journal thrive.

The Costs of Serving the Journal

At JCP, we believe that people will provide better feedback when they are not overwhelmed with journal work. Consequently, our desk rejection rates are high and our Associate Editors handle less than one paper a month, and never more than one new submission at a time. They typically receive at least one week off between papers. Critically, if all three reviewers recommend rejection of a paper, we almost always process it ourselves without getting AE input. We try to ensure that our ERB members handle only one new manuscript at a time, have a month off between reviews, and write not more than 7-8 reviews per year. That said, there are still many costs for serving the journal.

Time and Effort: Reviewing takes time and effort. Time spent reviewing has the opportunity costs of less time spent doing one’s own research, mentoring students, serving one’s university, and engaging in leisure. There are also learning costs, both operational (e.g., learning

how to utilize the journal's web interface) and strategic (e.g., learning how to efficiently allocate time and effort across tasks).

Focus: Reviewing shifts focus from other tasks, and task switching reduces efficiency. Reviewers must repeatedly leave the mental sphere of their own research projects to inhabit those of others'.

Control: We allow (and encourage) our AEs and ERB members to indicate when they will be unavailable to review, but outside of that time, they incur costs of giving up some control over their schedules. Submitted papers land on desks at times that do not always coincide with natural breaks in other aspects of one's workflow. We, in turn, struggle when four papers come in on one day (and are chasing our own revision deadline), and, ironically, worry if four days go by with no new submissions.

Negativity: Only a small percentage (approximately 6%) of papers submitted to JCP are accepted. Being a reviewer, an AE or an editor comes with the cost of providing more people negative feedback than positive feedback. Most humans do not enjoy being negative, and providing critical feedback can be psychologically draining. It can be difficult to compartmentalize and maintain positivity about the rest of one's day.

Friends: Our reviewers maintain anonymity, and our AEs have their names associated only with acceptances, but those of us who are editors sign our names to both positive and negative feedback. Possibly the most surprising, and gratifying, aspect of our entire editorship has been the number of thank you emails we have received for rejections, including desk-rejections. Nevertheless, it is understandably difficult for many authors to generate fond feelings toward those who criticize their papers (even on a revision request), and some may hold on to their grudges.

Gray areas. Editors have to evaluate evidence and make black and white decisions in areas of gray. Sometimes, we are charged with evaluating evidence that does not fall within our personal areas of expertise. Such instances increasingly pertain to potential violations of integrity, and allegations thereof. Decision-making in such circumstances involves stress, self-doubt, and criticism from others.

These costs are nontrivial at all levels of journal service and are exacerbated for editors. So, why take on these challenges? What did we get from it, and what could you get from it should you choose to take on more of these challenges?

The Benefits of Serving the Journal

Service to a journal can bring with it personal and professional benefits, though these are more psychologically and temporally distant than are the costs. For us, looking back, we believe that the benefits made the costs (which were undeniably high), worth it. Here's what we got from our tenure:

Exposure and Learning: Scholars tend to specialize in one, maybe two or three, research domains. Over time, people tend to gravitate towards papers in those domains, written by the same small set of colleagues. This has the long-term effect of narrowing one's perspective and limiting one's exposure to new ideas, thereby limiting one's growth as a scholar. As noted earlier, we, as editors, strive to closely match the reviewers' and the AEs' areas of expertise with the content domains of the paper, but sometimes, we just want a "good perspective," and so members of the review team may see a paper which is not in their plum area of research – as we do. Of course, while this can be costly to such reviewers, it comes with the benefit of gaining exposure to more areas of research outside of one's immediate research sphere. We have learned a great deal reading diverse author submissions and AE and reviewer feedback, and this has been

immensely gratifying. As Editors, our pledge to not impose “*our personal tastes on a vibrant and diverse field*” (Mukhopadhyay, Raghubir and Wheeler, 2018) has allowed us to interrogate our own inclinations as researchers. We now have a clearer sense of our own tastes, preferences, and identities as researchers, and, in that sense, have learned more about our own selves during these few years than we have at any time since we were PhD students.

Influence on the Field: Reviewers directly shape the content of the field by serving as guardians, as well as gatekeepers, of the pages of the journal. This influence is magnified for AEs, and for us, as editors. All scholars have views on what the field should look like, and when one takes on the mantle of journal service, these views become to some degree manifest. When you serve a journal, you can nudge the field closer to your ideal, even when that ideal means not imposing your tastes. In our first editorial, we had pledged to welcome diverse papers that fit the mission of JCP. The evidence of the diversity in the papers we have accepted during our term includes articles on Bayesian analysis (Wedel & Dong, 2020), machine learning (Matz et al., 2019), a qualitative analysis of survivors of domestic violence (FitzPatrick et al., 2019), an empirical paper devoid of inferential statistics (Mrkva et al., 2020), and a pure effects paper with no mechanism identified (Liu, Lamberton & Haws, 2020). This kaleidoscope of articles reflects the increasing diversity in the field.

Influence on Careers. By virtue of holding PhDs, we have all received beneficent guidance from others in the field, and that guidance promoted our career success. Serving a journal allows to extend that guidance beyond your immediate advisees. We have assisted those who needed help – authors, including those from less-endowed networks, with good ideas that needed refinement, and early career researchers who were keen to review to broaden their experience. We have provided feedback and direction to authors on their papers (even when we

were desk rejecting them) and helped them appreciate what it takes to publish in a top journal. Correspondingly, we have encouraged early career researchers on their reviewing. Every year, we assess our standing Editorial Board Members and ad hoc reviewers in terms of average ratings (every review is rated by an AE or Editor), timeliness, and declines and give feedback to ERB members whose inputs may have dipped and *ad hoc* reviewers who were on the cusp. We are delighted that several such scholars raised their reviewing to such high standards that they met the threshold for invitation onto our Editorial Review Board, enthusing it with vitality.

Recognition. Appearing on the masthead of JCP signals one's standing in the field as a domain expert. At JCP, however, it indicates more than that. It indicates a willingness to serve, by regularly providing timely, constructive and incisive feedback to authors, feedback that assists not only the editors in making decisions but also authors in improving the quality of their work, regardless of the decision on the paper. Let us quote from a note that a pre-eminent researcher requested us to forward to a reviewer after having received a rejection (emphases added): "This topic has interested me for quite a while. The challenge has always been to provide evidence that satisfies a review team. *Your review provided more insight into this challenge than any conversation I have had over the past five years. You cannot imagine how grateful I am.* I think we can both agree that this research is far from where it needs to be. That being said, *research cannot advance unless reviewers are willing to take the time to provide insights into the issue. This is what you did. You helped. So, I thought I'd write to say, "Thank you for helping."*" This note was not written to us but it is one of many. Although neither formal nor public, such notes are immensely valuable and motivating marks of recognition.

Community. Notwithstanding any of the above points, one can hold a position at a prestigious university without engaging in meaningful journal service. Indeed, journal service

may detract from research productivity. Not surprisingly, therefore, there is freeriding in the system. However, much as society at large cannot function on self-interest alone, our society (i.e., the Society for Consumer Psychology) cannot either. To operate, JCP, like all other peer-reviewed journals, requires the selfless dedication of our many excellent reviewers and AEs. It is up to each of us to determine the ratio between how much we give to and take from the societies we participate in. As recent events with COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have dramatically illustrated, we all benefit when all are willing to engage in some degree of self-sacrifice for the greater good. Journal service in that sense has similarities to mask-wearing in a pandemic and protesting police brutality while risking it. It benefits you (albeit at non-trivial costs), but it benefits others more. Some degree of self-sacrifice is critical for healthy functioning organizations (Grant, 2014). For us, knowing that we have all done our part to help out the Journal, SCP, and, more generally, our field, has been the greatest benefit of all.

In conclusion

Peer review is the foundation of modern science. Editors, Associate Editors, ERB members, and *ad hoc* reviewers, all work together as a team for the review process to function smoothly. However, like all systems and processes, peer review is not perfect and faces its own challenges (Gelman, 2016). By and large, we consumer psychologists treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. The overwhelming majority of the reviews and AE reports we receive from you are well-informed, thorough, constructive, insightful, and kind, and the note quoted above exemplifies this spirit. Looking around, we should be keenly aware that this is the exception, not the norm.

2020 has been challenging for us all on so many dimensions, but the Journal is thriving. For this, we thank our authors for sending us their work, and appreciate our amazing AEs and

ERB members, as well as *ad hoc* reviewers. Of course, we take our hats off to the peerless Managing Editor, Sandy Osaki. We cannot thank all of you who have made these sacrifices enough—you have advanced the work of hundreds of authors.

Our editorship has coincided with a period of immense tumult, but we have gained much from our experience and hope the JCP community has benefited as well. We are proud and honored to have been the custodians of this Journal over the last three years, and we leave it in excellent hands. We wish our successors Jennifer Argo, Lauren Block, and Thomas Kramer the very best as they set off on their own rollercoaster ride. For those of you considering starting, or increasing, journal service, we hope you will someday consider making similar sacrifices—for us, it was time well spent.

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