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Some Editorial Notes on Publishing and Publications in JCASP

Orla Muldoon & Flora Cornish

In May 2015, the Editor and Co-editors of the Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology saw some change. Transition and change is often accompanied by a period of learning and reflection. Without question those new to the editorial team have to learn how to manage the day to day elements of managing the journal. In so doing, there are many questions that ensue. The implicit has to be articulated for the benefit of the new additions. The explicit has to be justified. As a result of these conversations, it became clear that our own suppositions about the nature of the Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, its place within our discipline had consequences for Editorial processes and practices. We felt that it would be useful to share these thoughts with our readers.   Our aim is to demarcate the particular niche that JCASP occupies within our discipline and in so doing to highlight the value of the journal's contribution. We also hope that in making the remit of the journal clear, clear guidance is available to potential contributors about the appropriateness and fit of their work to the journal.

Subsequent to the editorial team meeting in May 2015 and after some further discussion, the editorial team of the *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* reviewed and ultimately rewrote its aims and scope. JCASP now proudly declares that it publishes "papers which advance the contribution of psychology to understanding and addressing community and social issues". This squarely places the journal's remit within the discipline of psychology. Sadly psychology and social psychology in particular have been in the doldrums in the wake of the fabrication and replication crises. Perhaps the most damning of the many damning comments made by the report into the Stapel affair, was that the review committee believed that 'Stapel has made no significant contribution to the social

psychological theory.' (page 54). This fact is deeply disturbing. Stapel was a mainstream figure publishing regularly in many mainstream social psychology journals. So Stapel's fabrications actually made no contribution to psychology. Yet this work, judged to be largely irrelevant, was published in very many of our most highly esteemed journals. JCASP aspires to publish research that makes a difference. We see psychology, and community and applied social psychology in particular, as providing a toolkit that can be brought to bear to understand and tackle pressing social issues of our time. Above all else we believe it is centrally important to that the content and contribution of any paper to our knowledge base within psychology is clearly evident. In practice, and here we are working to make the previously implicit explicit, submitted manuscripts have often been screened out without being sent for review ('desk rejected'), because they lacked any engagement with community or social psychological theories or concepts. One of the ways that research is cumulative is by engaging with concepts that are used by others. Papers whose contribution is to report specific findings, about, for example, stress in nurses, or littering behaviour in a particular city, or associations between demographic variables and health behaviours are not a good match for JCASP, *unless* they use their empirical findings to engage with and advance community/social psychological concepts.

The journal's reworked aims and scope also identify a "particular interest in developing psychology through working with these issues in real world settings and in advancing the capacity of community and social psychology to promote social justice and social inclusion". Agreeing this position within our editorial group resulted in considerable debate. For many years, psychology and social psychology in particular has argued that it takes an impartial stance: good science is value free. The fact that we now communicate our values in our aims and scope communicates explicitly a political stance that values social justice and inclusion. In line with contemporary post-modern theory, our position is that science is never value free.

Rather its presentation as such can camouflage biases and the habitual that can maintain the status quo. As such we particularly welcome papers that have a critical focus and that work to expose assumed or unacknowledged privilege.

Decades of research and theory in community and social psychology would tell us to beware of problems or solutions that make individual explanations pre-eminent (e.g. Billig, 1991; Campbell & Jovchelovitch, 2000; Gergen 2001; Haslam & Reicher, 2007; Trickett, 1984). Another common reason for us to 'desk reject' a paper is if its focus is solely at the individual level. Papers that orient exclusively to individual or intrapsychic explanations of behaviour ultimately fail to acknowledge how social and community contexts shape behaviour. So, for example, research investigating associations between cognitive variables assessed in the laboratory is unlikely to be published in JCASP. Likewise, clinical psychological research at the individual level, for example, cognitive predictors of mental health outcomes, is unlikely to be a good fit. Papers published in JCASP engage with the social and community contexts of behaviour.

Thus, JCASP orients towards the role of systems, communities and culture in shaping behaviour and the relationship between these social systems and individual behaviour. The third common reason for us to desk reject a submission therefore is if it reports decontextualised research. By this we mean research which takes place in non-naturalistic conditions (such as laboratory experiments), in which participants are likely to be behaving quite differently to the ways they behave in their everyday communities. Articles in JCASP are usually based on research which is meaningful to the community of people studied. For instance, research based on convenience samples of undergraduates is rarely suitable for the journal, unless the topic of study is meaningful and relevant to those undergraduate students given their current contexts. Psychology's rich traditions of research conducted in real world settings are the lifeblood of the journal.

Perhaps not surprisingly then JCASP is a potential home for a broad array of methodological approaches. We welcome manuscripts that employ the diverse range of methodology within our field, including qualitative (e.g. Jingree, 2015), participatory (e.g. Haaken, Wallin-Ruschman & Patange, 2012), survey (e.g. Takagi, Ikeda, Kobayashi, Harihara & Kawachi, 2015), experimental (e.g. Liebkind, Mähönen, Solares, Solheim, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2014) and evaluation research (e.g., Pancer, Nelson, Hasford & Loomis, 2013). Manuscripts are also welcome that engage with any of the variety of psychological theories which can open up and deepen our inquiry. JCASP aims to tackle the broad range of topics that are of concern to people in communities, including, among many others: migration (e.g. Figgou, 2015), prejudice (e.g. Vezzali & Giovannini, 2012), crowd behaviour (e.g. Cocking & Drury, 2014), social movements (e.g. Rosqvist, Brownlow & O'Dell, 2015), responses to mental health (e.g. van der Sanden, Bos, Stutterheim, Pryor & Kok, 2015), social contexts of health (e.g. Kirkby-Geddes, King & Bravington, 2013), disability (e.g., Bantjes, Swartz, Conchar & Derman, 2015), care (e.g., Walsh, O'Shea, Scharf & Shucksmith, 2014), poverty (e.g., Chauhan & Foster, 2014), debt (Walker, Burton, Akhurst & Degirmencioglu, 2015), empowerment (e.g. Nic a Bháird, 2013), and citizenship (e.g. Condor, 2011). By so doing, JCASP ultimately aims to publish research that contributes to identifying, understanding and tackling issues of social inclusion or social justice.

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