



Editorial

Current developments and challenges for the British Journal of Psychology

The *British Journal of Psychology* (*BJP*), founded in 1904, has a rich and exciting history to publish important empirical findings in psychology, while covering many different aspects of psychological research. Let us sketch some of the key aspects of the *BJP*'s current development.

Reputation and international scope

Despite the *BJP*'s name and history, the journal is becoming more and more international in terms of both authorship and readership. At the same time, we believe the journal's reputation in the field has developed well. For those who prefer this kind of metric, an inspection of the development of the journal's impact factor (IF) in the past two decades will underpin this – although bear in mind that the interpretation of single esteem indicators such as IF always requires critical reflection (Schweinberger, Edwards, & Neyer, 2015). The joint development of the journal's esteem and international scope, an explicit editorial goal 5 years ago, may be evaluated not only in terms of IF, but also in terms of a few other numbers from the past two decades. Between 2000 and 2005, the *BJP* published a total of 216 papers, of which almost 80% (169) came from the United Kingdom, with only 8%, 4%, and 3%, of papers from the United States, Australia, and Canada, respectively. In contrast, between 2006 and 2011, the *BJP* published a total of 342 papers, but by then less than half of those (47%) had come from the United Kingdom. Contributions in significant numbers now came from the United States and Canada (19% each), and also from Australia (7%). Remarkably perhaps, numbers of contributions from other European countries had remained very low during that period, with the possible exception of Germany (4%) and Spain (3%). Regarding the *BJP*'s editorial board, this included, in 2014, more than 65% UK-based researchers (10), with three associate editors from the United States, and one each from Canada and Australia. As of today, while UK-based researchers still form the biggest group (10), the editorial board has been expanded with a special focus on international representation. Thus, further associate editors from Germany (five), Australia, Belgium, Canada, Italy, and Switzerland (two each), as well as Austria, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States (one each), complement the current board.

Table 1 provides some more current data for submission activities and publications in the more recent period between 2013 and 2016. These suggest (i) a steady increase in annual submissions and (ii) a rather constant proportion of published against submitted manuscripts in the region of 14%. In parallel, *BJP*'s rejection rate that has remained in the region of 85% for some time. Table 2 focuses on submission activity and shows that while

UK-based researchers remain the most active group with respect to submissions to the *BJP*, just over a third of submissions came from the United Kingdom. A few developments and trends appear remarkable: First, submissions from Australia came second, accounting for about 10% of all submissions. Second, submissions from mainland Europe also have increased in numbers. While Spain and Germany have remained the relatively most active countries (albeit in reversed order relative to the 2006–2011 time period), there clearly has been substantial submission activity from other European countries, including Italy, the Netherlands and France. Third, and unsurprisingly, paper submission activity from Asian countries was also healthy and increasing.

A word about rejections

Obvious downsides of good submission activity include high paper rejection rates. We regret this and often have to ask authors to understand that some high-quality submissions need to be triaged, especially when these appear more suited to a specialist journal. In addition, in trying to keep a healthy balance between the increasing number of high-quality submissions, negotiations between the *BJP*, the *BPS*, and the publishers, the society resulted in a 25% increase in the page budget in 2015.

Special issues on timely topics

When looking at the number of papers and issues per year, it is clear that the *BJP* (when compared to other journals which appear more frequently) has more limited possibilities to include special issues on hot topics, or target papers, which review the current state of psychological research in a specific area and which come with commentaries that serve to stimulate scientific discussion. More often than not, such target articles are found to be highly useful for active scientists in a field, and accordingly receive strong scientific attention. Special issue articles typically are discussed more intensely by the scientific community when compared to regular articles and are known to create more impact, other things being equal (Brooks & de la Sala, 2010). Despite the page constraints, in recent years, the *BJP* has published target articles on psychological models of aesthetic perception (Leder & Nadal, 2014), on processes of mentalizing about others (Wu, Sheppard, & Mitchell, 2016), or on language development (Vihman, 2017). We were also successful in reducing the publication lag to 6–9 months, which has enabled us to take on further target article contributions, as well as an initiative for another special issue that is currently underway.

Table 1. Numbers of manuscripts submitted, papers published, and papers accepted in the *British Journal of Psychology* during each of the four consecutive years 2013–2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013–2016
Papers submitted	242	236	260	266*	1,004
Papers published	34	34	37	37	142
Papers accepted	30	38	45	36	149
N Publ./N subm.	14.0%	14.4%	14.2%	13.9%	14.1%

*In 2017, until and including November 24 when this editorial was finalized, 271 manuscript submissions were already received at the *BJP*.

Table 2. Numbers of manuscripts submitted to the *British Journal of Psychology*, by Countries of Origin, between 2013 and 2016

Country	N submissions	%
United Kingdom	351	35.1
Australia	99	9.9
United States	80	8.0
Spain	76	7.6
Germany	46	4.6
Italy	43	4.3
India	42	4.2
Netherlands	40	4.0
France	35	3.5
China	32	3.2
Iran	32	3.2
Canada	30	3.0

Table only includes countries with at least 30 (or 3%) of total submissions. Data based on a total 1,004 submissions.

Replicability and open science

The fact that certain, seemingly established findings in psychology and other disciplines cannot be replicated is deeply troubling and has the potential to undermine the scientific endeavour (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). Science rests crucially on the assumption that the empirical findings upon which our theories depend are replicable. Measures to improve transparency and replicability are currently discussed and put to test in psychology and beyond. Such measures include initiatives such as the open science badges (<https://cos.io/our-services/open-science-badges>) as simple optional measures to acknowledge when author makes their data and methods transparent (Kidwell *et al.*, 2016), pre-registered reports (Chambers, 2013), or, as a complementary approach, exploratory reports (McIntosh, 2017). This list is far from complete, and we would like to echo the conviction that multiple parallel initiatives (and evaluations of their eventual outcomes) are required to do justice to a complex problem. On a more positive note, psychology as a discipline may be particularly well equipped to lead initiatives to overcome scientific error and bias, and in fact has led the way to address these problems in a comprehensive manner (e.g., Pashler & Wagenmakers, 2012). The *British Psychological Society*, as the publisher of eleven high-profile journals in Psychology, is currently discussing various measures and actions in the interest of replicability and reputation of psychological science, while trying to avoid unwanted side effects such as increasing the bureaucratic burden on authors, editors, or reviewers. Although careful consideration of individual measures and attunement across all partner journals and subdisciplines of psychology takes some time, *BJP* takes active part in these discussions. While we obviously cannot forestall the effects and outcomes of this discussion at this stage, we hope that these general comments may provide a helpful context for researchers to prepare for some likely developments in the near future.

Some ideas for future directions

Science is an international enterprise that benefits everyone. One aim for the future is to continue to look outwards, and continue to grow the *BJP* as a truly international

multidisciplinary psychology journal with a focus on strong theoretical implications. It is important that international researchers are able to access the *BJP* (via individual/institutional subscriptions or open access initiatives) and are not disadvantaged by English-language requirements (e.g., via directing authors to appropriate low-cost proofreading services). Maintaining, and perhaps expanding, the international composition of the editorial board will also be crucial. As well as publishing theoretically important single papers from the international community, the *BJP* will continue to invite proposals for target articles and special issues. There are a number of challenges facing the field of psychology, such as increasing requirements for innovation and impact from funding bodies, the necessity for experiments to replicate, and calls for expanded data analytic techniques. The *BJP* aims to provide the editorial board and reviewers with the tools to navigate this changing landscape (e.g., by providing strategies for selecting good reviewers, D'Andrea & O'Dwyer, 2017). Finally, we aim to promote the excellent research published in the *BJP* in ways that appeal to the diverse readership, via published issues, electronic issues, commentaries, and social media.

We would like to thank the editorial board for their dedicated hard work, and to assure you that the *British Journal of Psychology* will remain committed to publishing high-quality psychological science that represents the many fields of psychology. In 2017, examples for the wide range of current research represented in this journal are easily identified. They include not only the target article on language development (Vihman, 2017) and its possible parallels to the development of face processing (Pascalis, Dole, & Loevenbruck, 2017), but also new findings from multisensory perception (Darnai *et al.*, 2017); visual attention and cultural differences (Amer, Ngo, & Hasher, 2017); on peers' influences on risk taking in young adulthood (Reniers *et al.*, 2017); on the psychology of mobile gambling behaviour (James, O'Malley, & Tunney, 2017); adverse consequences of conspiracy theories in the work context (Douglas & Leite, 2017); or, last but not least, a paper that originated from a high-profile symposium on face processing held at the *BPS Cognitive Psychology Section Annual Conference* in 2015 (Davies & Young, 2017), and that describes the rise and continued success of face processing research since Haydn Ellis had published his seminal review on the topic in this journal (Ellis, 1975).

Reflecting both technological progress and environmental and societal challenges, we have to acknowledge that psychological research is constantly changing. Research increasingly depends on technology that was largely unavailable only a few years ago, such as virtual reality, robotics, sophisticated multisensory stimulation, recordings of multiple aspects of brain activity, or research based on 'Big Data' gained via the Internet or mobile tracking and data collection devices. Psychological theorizing may face great challenges to keep pace with these developments. In this situation, the *BJP* actively encourages submissions with a strong impact on theory, ideally in more than one domain of psychology. Ultimately, a successful journal lives from you as the prospective authors. We look forward to the years to come, and trust that they will see some of the finest pieces of your psychological research published in the *British Journal of Psychology*.

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