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Beginning with this issue, I have "officially" assumed the duties of editor for the Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology. In many ways it is gratifying to have the journal returning to its literal and figurative home. The journal is literally home in that it has always been published in Champaign-Urbana, the home of the publisher, Human Kinetics, and now that the editorial office is here at the University of Illinois, the journal has finally made its way back to its roots. JSEP has returned home figuratively in the sense that my former mentor, Dan Landers, was the original editor, and now I get the privilege of carrying on the legacy begun by Dan and continued by Diane Gill, Jack Rejeski, Thelma Horn, and Bob Brustad. It strikes me that this is an awesome responsibility, but I also view it as a tremendous opportunity. JSEP has been a leading publication outlet for research in exercise and sport psychology, but it seems to me that it has the potential to make an even greater impact than it ever has before, with the current public health focus on exercise and physical activity. I thought I would take the opportunity afforded by this changeover in editors to present some ideas that I will be striving to implement and goals that I will be striving to achieve during my tenure as editor of JSEP.

I view the primary mission of the Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology as one of stimulating and communicating theory and research in exercise and sport psychology or, even more broadly, the psychology of physical activity. Thus, it is my opinion that the journal should emphasize original research that advances our understanding of human behavior as it relates to physical activity, exercise, and sport. Areas of interest include theory and research in social, experimental, developmental, and clinical psychology; psychophysiology; and psychobiology. The journal can also be a useful avenue for presenting comprehensive reviews, as well as brief reports detailing methodological advances or areas of special interest. The terms exercise and sport can pertain to either the independent or the dependent variables. The journal has certainly been a testament to the wide variety of methods that can be successfully utilized for studying exercise and sport psychology topics. The knowledge base on the benefits of exercise/physical activity has been rapidly increasing. In addition to the growing list of physical benefits, we continue to discover the psychological effects associated with or caused by physical activity/exercise. I firmly believe that JSEP should be a primary outlet for the best research on such psychological antecedents and outcomes.

The main way to fulfill the journal's primary mission is through the publication of quality research. This cannot and will not change. This is not the only way to achieve this goal, however. I intend to begin publishing papers that I will solicit from leading scholars, perhaps similar in some ways to the Human Kinetics Lecture that is published in the Supplement each June (see Lang, 2000). There will also be opportunities for scholarly debate. Some topics, both theoretical and methodological, are obviously more controversial than others, or there is more than one
way to look at the issue. In such cases, where appropriate, I am open to publishing opposing viewpoints, provided that they are reasonable and presented in a professional manner. I think this could be healthy for the field. Witness the debate between Zajonc and Lazarus in the mid-1980s (see Lazarus, 1984; Zajonc, 1984). In my opinion, this exchange had a tremendous impact on the way investigators thought about the distinctions between cognitions and emotions. To the best of my knowledge, such an interchange hasn’t happened in the exercise and sport psychology domain. I see the journal as a venue for that interchange to take place.

It is also important to realize that just because something is published, in this journal or elsewhere, it is not guaranteed to stand the test of time. Others might have data that show a previously held position to be in error. Some might find faulty logic where the reviewers did not. Rather than keeping such insights to themselves, I would encourage such viewpoints to be voiced. As an example, the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI; Spielberger, 1979) has been used extensively in studies examining psychological effects of exercise. It has gotten to the point where the SAI is used without giving much thought to why. As recent articles have shown (Ekkekakis, Hall, & Petruzzello, 1999; Rejeski, Hardy, & Shaw, 1991), use of the SAI is questionable in exercise studies. Without such empirical demonstrations, however, the use of the SAI would likely have continued with no thought to its appropriateness. At least now, informed scientists can make a decision to use or not use the SAI based on the issues raised in these articles.

One of my immediate and primary goals will be to facilitate a faster turnaround of manuscripts submitted to JSEP for review. My sense is that this process takes longer than it needs to, which can be a source of frustration for authors awaiting decisions on their work. The widespread use of electronic communication should be useful in obtaining faster reviews from reviewers. Reviews can be submitted as attachments to email sent directly to the editor or an associate editor. This alone can save at least a week from the delays often associated with postal mail. Reviews submitted directly to the editor or associate editor also save time in the decision-making process, as everything he or she needs to make the editorial decision is right there and doesn’t need to be forwarded to anyone else (reviews were previously submitted to the editor, who then forwarded them to the appropriate associate editor). One of my more long-term goals will be to work with Human Kinetics to explore the possibilities of making the entire process more electronic in nature, from the initial submission to the final adjudication of the manuscript.

One additional change that takes place in this issue is the establishment of sections within the Table of Contents. Original articles can be submitted to the journal in one of the following peer-reviewed sections: Exercise Psychology, which covers the influence of exercise and physical activity on psychological processes and/or the influence that psychological factors might have on exercise and physical activity behavior, or Sport Psychology, which examines psychological factors influencing the involvement, enhancement, or maintenance of sport behavior and/or the influence that such behavior might have on psychological processes. Although this might create boundaries, the move is a pragmatic one in that it will allow the reader interested only in exercise (or sport) psychology to quickly scan the Table of Contents for articles of interest rather than having to sort through the entire contents to find the article(s) that they might be interested in.

Those considering submitting their research should know that I make every effort to get the most knowledgeable experts to serve as reviewers, regardless of
their disciplinary home (e.g., psychology, physiology, behavioral medicine, exercise psychology, etc.). Thus, you should know that your work will be reviewed by the best that I can find.

I am looking forward to the challenge that lies ahead. My hope is that I can leave the journal a more prominent source for knowledge on exercise and sport psychology than it already is.

References


