

Editorial

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As we begin the 32nd year of the publication of *Psychophysiology*, the journal has one of the highest citation impact ratings of any journal in psychology or physiology. Articles that are published in *Psychophysiology* are read and cited widely by scientists in multiple disciplines. The continued success of the journal depends on the quality and breadth of the papers submitted to us and the excellent editorial advice we receive from expert reviewers. We therefore thought it appropriate to comment briefly on some of our objectives, policies, and procedures.

Editorial Policies

We seek to publish papers that are conceptually exciting and that reflect the broad range of topics and methods that characterize contemporary research on the interface between psychological and physiological processes. We anticipate that most of these papers will report original research. Authors of empirical papers will want to pay special attention to casting their research within the prior literature while outlining a clear theoretical motivation for the independent and dependent variables. An additional criterion in selecting papers for publication in the journal is methodological and statistical rigor. Of course, appropriately formulated and executed studies can nevertheless yield results that are inconsistent, uninformative, or marginally important. Thus, additional criteria by which papers will be evaluated for possible publication in the journal include the sagacity of the interpretations, the originality of the ideas, and the magnitude of the contribution to understanding an important phenomenon.

Ground-breaking theoretical papers and evaluative literature reviews are sought whether or not they include original empirical data. Theoretical papers should specify a model that has a compelling empirical basis and that yields specific and unique predictions that can be tested empirically. It is also desirable that the predictions from the model follow clearly from the psychological or physiological mechanism delineated in the model rather than from the broad guidelines of a general perspective or heuristic formulation. Reviews of neural mechanisms are also appropriate. If the neural mechanisms related to an electrocortical, visceral, or health outcome are understood, investigators are in a better position to understand their peripheral manifestations and behavioral import.

Evaluative literature reviews differ from theoretical articles in that they pull together representative research on a topic, address strengths and weaknesses in this research, and specify conceptual principles and empirical generalizations that can be drawn from this literature. Meta-analyses may be useful to provide statistical support for interpretations in literature reviews, but reviews will be evaluated primarily in terms of their scholarship and conceptual contribution. Thus, the emphasis in theoretical articles is on deductive reasoning, whereas the emphasis in literature reviews is on inductive reasoning. The publication of theoretical articles and literature reviews will appear in a marked section in the journal just as is the publication of methodological articles.

The journal has long been viewed as the publication outlet of choice for premier methodological advances, and this is a tradition that will be maintained. However, the designation of a Methodology Editor has been interpreted by some to mean that a special value is being placed on methods rather than ideas. This interpretation is unfortunate; theoretical developments and tests benefit from well-developed paradigms and measures. Over the

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past several decades, technological advances in bioelectronics, imaging procedures, ambulatory monitoring, and laboratory computing have made it possible to record signals noninvasively from the brain and peripheral physiological systems with greater sensitivity and fidelity than ever before. In addition, developments in neuroscience and behavioral medicine and advances in receptor physiology and biochemical and cellular assays have opened new fields of inquiry in psychophysiology. We seek to publish articles that reflect this growth and diversity in the field and articles that cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Our desire to publish articles from a broad array of areas is reflected in the choice of associate editors. Members of the editorial board include MDs and PhDs, individuals affiliated with psychiatry and neurology departments as well as psychology departments, experts in the central and the peripheral nervous system, and experts in cognitive neuroscience, behavioral medicine, CNS-immune system interactions, and neuroendocrinology as well as in traditional areas of psychophysiology. The editorial board also represents the geographical and gender diversity that characterize students and investigators in the field. All are distinguished scientists with extensive expertise, many have considerable prior editorial experience, and all are committed to working on behalf of the journal to provide authors with quick, objective, and constructive feedback on their papers.

We have also modified the policy regarding letters to the editor and we have developed a journal policy for handling critiques and replies. Letters to the editor submitted for publication compete for the same limited pages and have the same exposure as articles that are judged by peer review to represent a significant contribution to the field of psychophysiology; therefore, letters will also be subjected to peer review to insure that they represent a sufficient contribution to justify expenditure of journal space. Most letters that are judged by peer review to warrant publication are in fact more appropriately published in a format other than a letter (e.g., Critique, Brief Report, Theoretical Note). With this in mind, the Instructions to Contributors have been changed to encourage authors to prepare submissions in a format that might be more in keeping with the rigor and standards that have come to characterize the journal.

Some abstracting services allocate no more than 960 characters including punctuation and spaces for each abstract. When an abstract is longer, the 960-character limitation is nevertheless enforced. Authors are the most appropriate individuals to do this editing, so we are asking authors to prepare abstracts for their articles that meet this 960-character maximum.

Editorial Procedures

We recognize that it is especially important that each paper be dealt with in a thorough, impartial, reasoned, and constructive fashion, and we intend to try our hardest to make it rewarding for authors to submit significant conceptual, empirical, and methodological papers on a wide array of topics to *Psychophysiology*.

When manuscripts are submitted to the journal, they are assigned to an appropriate action editor. The action editor then selects reviewers who are experts in the area of the paper and who are recognized for providing objective and constructive reviews. To the extent that an action editor selects the right reviewers, the evaluations of the paper will be helpful and well informed. Therefore, we view this as one of the most important

decisions an action editor will make about a manuscript. We hope that those who are asked to serve as a consultant on a manuscript will agree to serve in this important capacity.

The most important task of the editorial board is to maintain the constructive tone, objectivity, and intellectual quality of manuscript reviews. In this way, authors receive constructive feedback on their research, and the impact of papers published in the journal is optimized. For a journal to be an attractive and effective outlet for authors and readers, reviews should also be completed in a timely fashion. We therefore have been working on procedures to insure the timely completion of reviews. The mean editorial lag authors can expect is 8–10 weeks for normal submissions and 3–5 weeks for special reports. Estimates of central tendency provide little solace to authors whose papers are outliers in the distribution of editorial lags. Therefore, we also have set the goal of rarely exceeding an editorial turn-around time of 12 weeks for normal submissions and 6 weeks for special reports.

The preparation and editorial handling of revisions can be additional sources of delays in the publication of articles, and we are committed to minimizing these delays as well. To insure that articles appearing in the journal are timely, authors are asked to complete revisions within 6 months of the request. In addition, the journal policy is to not automatically subject revisions to a second round of reviews, although the action editor will reserve the right to seek additional reviews if this is judged necessary after studying the revision. Furthermore, to avoid the frustration and delays that can come from requests for multiple revisions and rounds of reviews, the editorial policy is to limit requests for “second” revisions to cases in which only minor revisions or emendations are required. Thus, authors are encouraged to be as responsive as possible to reviews when preparing their revisions and to thoroughly document changes in the cover letter.

Delays in mailing, which do not contribute to the quality of the reviews of manuscripts, can add days or weeks to editorial lags. Whenever possible, therefore, we are using electronic mail and fax, and we are asking reviewers to use these modes of communication to transmit their reviews. Authors should also not hesitate to contact the editorial office or action editor when they have questions or concerns. Authors, for instance, can expect to receive a letter within days of our receiving a manuscript confirming that the manuscript was received and specifying the name, address, phone number, email address, and fax number of the action editor for the manuscript. If authors do not receive this letter in a timely fashion, they should contact the editor at cacioppo.1@osu.edu. We also welcome any suggestions, questions, comments, or complaints regarding journal policies, operations, or content. We take seriously our editorial responsibilities to the journal and its readers and especially to authors.

In addition to minimizing the editorial lag, the target for the publication lag is between 6 and 10 months. The Society for Psychophysiological Research is committed to maintaining this short publication lag by publishing extra pages when a backlog of articles develops. Furthermore, with the publication of the journal by Cambridge University Press, the journal has been mailed to subscribers the month prior to the date on the cover. This expedited production and distribution of the journal will be continued. By working to minimize the publication and production lags as well as the editorial lag, authors and readers can expect work published in the journal to be at the cutting edge of the field.

In sum, we intend to continue the policies and traditions of rigor and excellence established by our predecessors while also being responsive to the maturation of the field as a theoretical science, the development of new methodologies and paradigms, and the growth of the field to include new topic areas. Three decades ago, psychophysiology could be defined as research in which the dependent variable was a physiological measure and the independent variable a behavioral measure. As we approach

the 21st century, psychophysiology encompasses but goes far beyond this operational definition. We therefore take on this editorial job with a great sense of excitement and responsibility. We are enthused by the prospect of maintaining the stature of the journal and of publishing articles that are both stimulating and significant. We also hope that our performance is worthy of the excellent papers and editorial advice that we know we will receive.

