

Proposal for the Co-Editorship of *Social Psychology Quarterly*
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Vision Statement

Social Psychology Quarterly (SPQ) is the key outlet for publishing work in sociological social psychology. The journal has long been in excellent editorial hands and here we propose to maintain and extend the successes of recent editorial teams. Our vision is organized around the following themes, which are true to the spirit of the current editors, Richard Serpe and Jan Stets: i) extend the range of sociologists publishing in – and reading – *SPQ*, ii) continue improving the review process, from the time the paper is submitted until it is ultimately rejected or accepted for publication, iii) keeping research notes and enhancing readability of *SPQ* articles, and iv) implementing practices and policies that improve responsibility in research.

Extending the range of sociologists publishing in – and reading – SPQ

We plan to extend the range of sociologists publishing in and reading *SPQ* through a series of incremental adjustments to current policies. First, we plan to routinely solicit submissions from sections of the ASA whose membership does not strongly overlap with the social psychology section. By encouraging submissions from scholars who do not ordinarily publish in *SPQ*, we hope to clearly signal our interest in publishing research that incorporates social psychological concepts and theory even if the research is not, in the main, social psychology.

Second, we plan to pursue opportunities (e.g., via ASA, the social media presence established by Serpe and Stets, and via our professional connections and networks that extend outside of sociology) to advertise recent research published in *SPQ*. Social psychology has a great deal to contribute to wider conversations about race, inequality, culture, and other issues of keen interest to audiences within and outside of sociology, and we hope to encourage and support a fruitful two-way exchange.

Third, we hope to work with authors and the ASA Media Office to develop press releases communicating findings and discoveries of public interest. While many universities have their own local press offices, they are often reliant on faculty to reach out about their current research, which many faculty are loathe to do.

Fourth, we intend to plan one or more special issues. Potential special issues would focus on the growing literature on social psychological approaches to health and mental health (relying to some extent on colleagues who have particular expertise in this area); social networks (a vibrant area that not only also traces its roots to *Sociometry*, but is also a focus of one member of our proposed editorial team); and social psychological approaches to inequality (inequality is more often studied primarily at the macro-level; a special issue would provide an outlet for collecting the state-of-the-art on its micro- and meso-level research components as well).

Continuing to improve the review process

The attractiveness of a journal to authors is often heavily influenced by the quality and speed of the review process. We plan to build on the policies and procedures from the current

editors to continue to improve SPQ's excellent record in this area. To do so, we will work closely with the Managing Editor, who will be selected from candidates local to us, to ensure that papers reach the hands of qualified reviewers as soon as possible and that overdue reviews are followed up on promptly. We plan to continue the previous editors' policy of always asking one member of the editorial board to provide a review on each paper.

In order to avoid burnout, both among our board members and our general reviewing population, we expect to maintain the current rate of desk rejections of papers that are clearly not ready for peer review. Recognizing that many such submissions come from graduate students, early career scholars, or scholars whose first language may not be English, we will be judicious in providing constructive feedback to them. We will also make use of desk rejections as a mechanism for reducing the risk of submitting for those who are not traditional social psychologists; it is far more attractive to take a chance on a new journal if you know that the editors will desk reject an unsuitable paper, with constructive feedback, promptly. In short, while we work hard to minimize the burden on our reviewers by desk rejecting papers that are not ready for peer review, or are simply too far from SPQ's domain to be suitable for publication, we will also strive to provide useful feedback on papers that were not suitable for review. We expect that authors whose papers are desk rejected will have a decision within two weeks of submission.

We plan to continue the current editors' policy of seeking reviews within three weeks. According to the current editors, most SPQ reviewers have been able to meet this deadline. For papers that are reviewed, we will aim to communicate an outcome to authors within eight weeks of submission.

We also plan to work with reviewers to encourage more targeted reviews. A common criticism of the review process (and a key rallying cry for new journals such as *Sociological Science*) are the extensive reviewer comments on the framing of the paper as well as the tendency for authors to feel compelled to rewrite papers to appease these reviewers. This is an especially pointed issue in light of the recent (2015) Strang and Siler paper in *Sociological Theory*, finding that reviewers often cause dramatic changes in the framing of a paper, but rarely critique the methods or measurements used. Such a result is, arguably, quite opposed to the hypothetical goal of peer review. Of course, comments on a paper's framing can often result in a substantially improved product whose contributions are clearer and easier to appreciate. But often times, they are just different (i.e., not objectively better or worse) views of how the paper could be framed. We plan to encourage reviewers to distinguish fundamental issues (e.g., theoretical ambiguity, methodological problems, or problems with the analyses) from framing issues, or matters of taste. And while we will certainly encourage reviewers to comment on framing, by offsetting these issues from more fundamental issues, we hope to create a dialogue between authors, reviewers, and us as editors, that lead to better attention on methods, and a reduced tendency to reframe simply for the sake of reframing.

By encouraging reviewers to give more targeted reviews and by being judicious in our own comments to authors, we hope to eliminate much of the guesswork and anxiety for authors who receive revise and resubmit decisions. That is, we will follow the recent move of ASA journal editors to give R&Rs only to those papers that stand a very good chance of ultimately being accepted for publication. We will accomplish this by being as clear as possible about what

revisions would improve the paper and rarely involving new reviewers in resubmissions. This will further help reduce the time from initial submission to final decision.

Maintaining research notes and enhancing readability of SPQ articles.

As authors and long-time readers of SPQ, we were very happy to see that Serpe and Stets brought back research notes. We consider these notes to be an excellent way of distributing research findings that are interesting and important while lending themselves to a lower word count than typical SPQ articles. We will therefore continue to encourage the submission of research notes.

More generally, we will encourage authors of all submissions to be economical with their word-counts, retaining the existing 10,000 word limit for full articles. While word limits like this are often a source of consternation (which we have ourselves felt as authors), they are frequently surprisingly achievable. Moreover, they have benefits for authors, both because shorter papers are more likely to be read, and because a larger number of papers can be included in each issue if each paper is not so long.

Having explained our preference for shorter papers, we also want to emphasize our awareness that some types of research, perhaps especially qualitative research, often requires a longer format. While we will also encourage authors of such papers to be mindful of their length, we will be willing to relax the word count limit for papers that could truly benefit from it, and see an overall emphasis on economy as an important way to obtain space for these longer pieces.

As an additional way of helping authors to write more focused papers, we will encourage them to move material, when suitable, to online appendices, as is becoming more common across many journals. While material truly essential to the paper should always appear in its published form, we nevertheless recognize the potential for online repositories to expand a journal's ability to present supplementary analyses without sacrificing brevity.

Finally, we plan to take steps to make SPQ a leader in research responsibility and replicability. We have all been shocked and saddened by recent cases of research fraud in psychology, up to and including wholesale invention of data. Fortunately, such incidents have not emerged within sociological social psychology, perhaps because research in sociological social psychology has generally relied on longer running research programs and employed a greater variety of methods than its psychological counterpart. That said, improving responsibility standards is critical for all disciplines. To this end, we plan to encourage authors to make data available, when possible and appropriate to particular methodological approaches. We fully appreciate that data sharing is more problematic for some methodologies, such as ethnographies, and we will not require authors to make data available when doing so would pose professional, practical, or ethical problems. But we will work with all authors to craft explanations (to be included as footnotes) of any methods or data that can be (practically and ethically) shared and, where relevant, an indication of when any particular materials will become publicly available.

In line with this emphasis, we will encourage authors to make specific procedures (e.g., instructions to research participants); code and analysis, data (where possible), and other robustness checks available online, through SPQ's website as well as, potentially, other data depository services. Thus, while we will not require data deposits as a condition of publication, we will emphasize in our communications with authors of accepted papers the importance of

making data and code available whenever possible and appropriate, as an important step towards improved research responsibility standards.

Lastly, we plan to strongly encourage replications when possible and appropriate. In the past, across most disciplines, editorial policies have created disincentives for doing replication research. Nevertheless, we believe that social psychologists engaged in research intended to be generally applicable ignore issues of replication and qualifying claims at our peril. To create an incentive for this traditionally undervalued type of work, as editors, we will send clear signals of our interest in publishing high quality replications, as well as analyses that highlight the boundary conditions of previously published work. We recognize that replication can and should play a more important role in some research areas than others. For instance, ethnographic insights are frequently bound to a specific time and context and thus attempts to replicate any findings from these studies may be ill-conceived. We wish to emphasize that our editorial policies -- on data access, replication and other matters -- will honor the rich theoretical and methodological diversity and traditions that have long characterized sociological social psychology in general and *SPQ*, in particular. We envision *SPQ* as being the go-to journal for the state-of-the art in social psychological research, and encouraging researchers to clarify and qualify what “we know” from prior work is a central means of realizing this vision.

Co-Editor Background Information

We propose a co-editor team to manage *Social Psychology Quarterly*, and believe there are several advantages to co-editorial, rather than solo-editor structures. First, we have a powerful interest in keeping review and decision times short, which is easier to accomplish when the load is shared across several individuals. Second, co-editors are able to act as sounding boards and play devil’s advocates for each other; a large part of the success of the scientific process is its inclusion and institutionalization of doubt, and we believe this can be constructively included at the editorial level. Third, a good set of co-editors will bring different sets of skills and expertise to the table, which is particularly important for our plan to expand the reach of *SPQ*. The proposed co-editors, Brent Simpson and Matthew E. Brashears, are particularly qualified in this last regard. We are friends and colleagues, but do not regularly collaborate with each other. Indeed, our single direct collaboration to date (Simpson, Brashears, Gladstone and Harrell 2014) was a paper that drew on each of our methodological strengths, including Simpson’s expertise in altruism and experimental designs, and Brashears’ knowledge of homophily and skills in analyzing larger network datasets. We hope to bring the same synergistic strength and demonstrated ability to collaborate successfully to editing *SPQ*.

Simpson has extensive experience with *Social Psychology Quarterly*. In addition to the editorial boards of *Social Forces* and *Rationality & Society*, he served on the editorial board of *SPQ* from 2008 to 2010 and has regularly reviewed for the journal for his entire career. Moreover, he has published in *SPQ* a total of nine times. His research, while most closely aligned with the group processes tradition, has focused mainly on issues related to prosocial behavior (including trust, generosity, altruism, cooperation, and collective action) but has also included work on research methodology and research practices, social networks, power and

status, inequality and discrimination. Most of his research has involved laboratory experiments, although his work has also drawn on data from representative surveys and mixed-methods.

Brashears is also highly experienced with *Social Psychology Quarterly*. One of his first solo publications appeared in SPQ, he is currently serving a term on the editorial board, and has regularly reviewed for the journal for most of his career. He is also currently beginning a term of service on the ASA Social Psychology Section Council, and has previously served on the council for the Mathematical Sociology Section. Much of his work employs innovative laboratory experiments to understand the relationship between cognition and social networks, appearing in outlets such as *Nature Scientific Reports*, *Advances in Group Processes*, and *Social Networks*. He has recently been asked to contribute a chapter on this topic to an upcoming edition of *Frontiers in Cognitive Psychology* (Michael Vitevitch, ed.), demonstrating his cross-disciplinary reach. Brashears is also experienced in simulation models (paper forthcoming in ASR) and the analysis of large representative datasets (including survey experiments).

A brief inspection of our included CVs demonstrates our research productivity and reach in the field, which are essential qualities in co-editors. Yet, it is also evident that we cannot claim to adequately cover all areas of social psychology by ourselves. As such, while we will not (as stated in the application instructions) name specific candidates for the Deputy Editor posts or editorial board more generally, we would like to discuss our recruitment strategy. We intend to seek out scholars with different skillsets from our own, and hope to draw at least one of the Deputy Editors from among those social psychologists who employ interpretivist frameworks and qualitative methods. This will both close a gap in our own knowledge, and ensure that these types of research have a representative at a high level within the journal. Sociological social psychology benefits from a remarkably broad set of theoretical and methodological traditions and we would aim to ensure that this breadth is reflected in the make-up of the editorial board, particularly focusing on scholars whose skills diverge from our own. We intend to continue the previous co-editors' policy of requesting one review from an editorial board member for each paper, and hope to involve the deputy editors more directly in decisions on papers outside our own areas of expertise, or about papers that may indeed benefit from a limited relaxation of the word length limits. In short, we believe that many different approaches have merit, even if we do not use them ourselves, and hope to assemble a set of Deputy Editors and an editorial board that will ensure that we select the best from all corners of social psychology.

While an advantage of a co-editorial team is the ability to share the load, it is obviously undesirable to simply split the submissions in two and proceed independently. It is here that our geographic proximity, previous success in working together, and personal friendship provide a particular advantage. We plan to allocate manuscripts between us on the basis of substantive focus, matching papers to the co-editor with the greatest overlap. The responsible co-editor will then work with the managing editor to select appropriate reviewers. In the event that a desk reject appears warranted, the responsible co-editor will ask for a brief review from the other co-editor, and we will only desk reject when both co-editors agree that such is appropriate. Each week the co-editors will have a formal meeting with the Managing Editor, during which the submission portfolio will be discussed. For most papers, this will be quite brief, allowing the team to focus on those papers where a more difficult decision is likely (e.g., conflicting reviews). These meetings will thus provide an opportunity for each co-editor to have input on every

decision, though in practice will devote the majority of joint attention to challenging cases requiring careful attention.

In summary, the proposed co-editors bring a wealth of non-overlapping experience and expertise to SPQ. We have a long history of service to the journal and the discipline, as well as considerable research interests within social psychology. We plan to bolster this diverse expertise with deputy editors and an editorial board that are even more broadly representative of the diverse and vibrant areas within social psychology. Finally, our proximity and demonstrated effective working relationship will allow us to keep review and decision times short while also guaranteeing every paper receives editorial attention.

Institutional Support

One of the best things we bring to the table is our institution and the support it would provide. The sociology department at the University of South Carolina has long been recognized as a top program, ranking 4th in the most recent USNews and world report ranking of social psychology programs. Indeed, of the six programs listed by US News and World Reports, USC is the only department where SPQ has not yet been edited. In addition to Simpson and Brashears, USC claims Barry Markovsky and Shane Thye (co-editor of *Advances in Group Processes*) among its social psychology faculty, making it a powerhouse in the area. A number of our other colleagues, while not explicitly identifying as social psychologists, rely to a significant degree on social psychology to inform their substantive research on gender and sexualities (Pfeffer), race and ethnicity (Cummings and Henderson), health and well-being (Augustine, Cummings, Henderson), family (Augustine, Hartnett, Pfeffer) among other substantive areas. Beyond these substantive and theoretical skills, our colleagues bring a wealth of additional qualitative (e.g., Pfeffer) and quantitative (e.g., Anderton) skills to the table. In other words, we have ready access to a many colleagues who are both friendly to and enthusiastic about social psychology, while also being able to provide advice and feedback in broader methodological and substantive areas. USC's close proximity to other strong social psychology programs such as the University of Georgia (Dawn Robinson; Jody Clay-Warner) and Emory University (Cathryn Johnson; Karen Hegtvedt) has further enhanced our already vibrant social psychological community. Finally, a large number of graduate students come to USC to specialize in social psychology and many work in our large and well-equipped laboratory facility for social psychological investigation. We can thus not only enhance the graduate experience of our students by involving them in the journal, but can rely upon our motivated and well-trained students to improve the experiences of our authors.

Besides this expertise, as indicated in the attached letter of support, our department, college and University have committed to very high levels of support should we be selected as the next editors of SPQ. Most importantly, given the high level of activity required to maintain the very high standards of the journal, we will each be granted one course reduction each year that we are co-editing the journal. This will help to free up the considerable time needed to properly edit SPQ. Further, we will be provided with office space and computers (exclusive of what we already possess as faculty), as well as any supplies necessary for the journal.