

Advancing science and creating a scientifically informed community at JCASP

The present editorial team has now coordinated the *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology (JCASP)* for 3 years. We have taken the journal in a precise direction towards increasing the volume and quality of articles, many of which articulate clear and positive societal and community impacts. In this editorial, we present JCASP's revised and expanded scope and the orientations and activities that are being undertaken in support of new initiatives.

The editorial team welcomes research from all areas of community and social psychology. We accept empirical, theoretical, and methodological articles, and welcome a wide range of methodologies, including quantitative (Pecini et al., 2022), qualitative (Varma & Siromahov, 2023), and mixed methods research (Kothari, Fischer, Mullican, Lipscomb, & Jaramillo, 2022), as well as correlational (Gray, Randell, Manning, & Cleveland, 2023), longitudinal (Joshanloo, 2022), and experimental designs (Mäkinen et al., 2022). Relatedly, we have expanded the types of articles that we accept. In addition to research papers and commentaries traditionally accepted by this journal, we will now consider meta-analyses and reviews (Cadamuro et al., 2021). Importantly, however, these should be directly relevant for the advancement of community and social psychology praxis. Reviews should not just be a summary of research, they should also provide an analysis that creates a framework for understanding the literature regarding the focal topic and present potential to advance the field. Now we also welcome replication studies, which can strengthen the external validity of research results, and registered reports (requiring authors to submit the theoretical rationale and study plan before collecting the data), which contribute to increasing the transparency of research. In the case of registered reports, full articles will be published, independently of whether results support the hypotheses. Finally, we also welcome short research-based policy briefs that summarise key findings and present options for application at the level of policy and/or community action.

We have recently undergone a re-scope that meaningfully expanded our original scope. JCASP does not only qualify as an applied journal but considers all areas of social psychology, giving special importance to work that is directly or indirectly relevant to communities. Our focus is on how the social context and community processes can influence the mind and behaviour within a given social system at the individual, group or institutional level. While a study should be theoretically motivated on the basis of existing theories and empirical evidence, and provide advancement to the field, the fact that it is field-based and/or has clear theoretical implications is especially valued at JCASP. We do not believe in the dichotomy between theory and practice, rather we think that these dimensions of scholarship are the two sides of the same coin (cf. Vezzali & Stathi, 2021). As an example, Cocco et al. (2023) advanced knowledge of the application of the vicarious contact construct, based on the idea that observing positive contact between two groups can improve intergroup relations (Vezzali, Hewstone, Capozza, Giovannini, & Wölfer, 2014; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). The idea was extended to the phenomenon of group-based bullying, which is bullying directed at certain groups. To adapt the construct to young children, the authors created ad hoc fairy tales incorporating

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the principles of vicarious contact, finding that a field intervention was effective in fostering bystanders' intentions to counteract interethnic bullying, as well as the underlying psychological processes.

JCASP is an author-friendly journal: we do not set a target rejection rate, and we look for reasons to accept a paper and not motivations to reject it. We also do not require a specific format. Our support team can help authors with formatting issues: we are interested in the quality and impact of articles.

We value good research: if the theoretical rationale is good, methods are sound and conclusions are evidence-based—we want to help disseminate the work. In other words, we do not reject good scientific articles only because they do not have sufficient innovation: replication studies or solid scientific studies with an incremental contribution to the literature are highly appreciated. We believe that social psychological and applied research can significantly contribute to the advancement of knowledge and praxis, creating new theories that can be of direct relevance to community well-being, and therefore we value theoretical novelty. Note that novelty does not merely rest on new findings: it can also be provided by an innovative methodological design, replication of previous results, or providing confidence in findings across a number of independent studies.

We value targeted special issues. In the last 3 years, we have published special issues on key topics of community and applied social psychology, including social inclusion for LGBTQ communities ('Stonewall uprising: 50 years later—Emerging challenges for LGBTQ communities around the world'), challenging injustice to foster bystander interventions ('Challenging injustice: Understanding upstanding, civic action, and bystander intervention to promote justice'), facing COVID-19 pandemic at the community level ('The societal relevance of communities in the COVID-19 era'). We are also currently running a variety of special issues focused on different facets of the promotion of community well-being. One special issue is dedicated to research featured in or inspired by the 5th International Conference on Social Identity and Health. A further special issue concerns the understanding of multiculturalism ('Multicultural identities in context: The influence of social, community, environmental and historical factors'). We have recently launched a call for a special issue on how sport can be used to benefit communities ('Sport for the community: Psychological and sociomoral benefits of sport participation in youth and adult communities'), with the idea that sport can be a valuable tool that our societies can use to face relevant social issues. A further special issue relates to the impact of modern technologies on the work of psychologists ('Community psychology in the era of hybrid real-world settings: How modern technologies have changed individuals' experiences and psychologists' work'). The more recent special issue that we launched aims to investigate the phenomenon of collective action to produce social equality ('Promoting social change through collective action locally, nationally, and globally'). *JCASP* also has happily joined the 'Gender equality in education' multi-journal special issue promoted by Wiley and includes 24 journals, an innovative way to obtain a rich and interdisciplinary issue on a key societal topic.

Special issues are especially valued in this journal, because these collections provide the opportunity for geographically dispersed scholars to come together to share their work on particular topics within the domain of social and community psychology. For this reason, we have a continuously open call for proposals, with the aim of collecting new and exciting ideas for special issues that can be of interest to academics as well as to practitioners.

The last topic that we would like to discuss in this editorial relates to the relevance of *JCASP* to our communities, including stakeholders and practitioners. Although an academic journal has research as its primary aim, *JCASP* also wishes to publish research that is useful to communities, providing scientifically based indications on how to benefit individuals, groups, and communities. To this end, there has been an increase in open access articles published in *JCASP*, which will be of interest to both academics and non-academics. However, the language of science is often technical in nature and can be difficult to read and understand for non-specialist audiences. Non-specialists who are interested in learning the developments of science in the field of social and community psychology might benefit from efforts to 'translate' theoretical ideas, methods and research findings into more accessible formats. For this reason, 3 years ago we launched the 'social impact statement,' consisting of a file for dissemination, which is freely accessible and voluntarily provided as supplementary material, where authors can summarise their article and provide concrete evidence-based recommendations that can be immediately

translated into practice. Given the aims of the journal, we strongly encourage the authors to include such summaries in their articles.

We are also about to launch a new initiative, with the aim of creating a community interested in sharing and learning from social practices that provide meaning to our scholarship. We are specifically thinking about creating a section where authors can disclose all that is behind the scenes of a field intervention (for instance) with which contributors are engaged. As an example, a prejudice-reduction intervention in schools often requires discussions with school managers, teachers and parents, but possibly also events to publicly launch it in collaboration with relevant institutions. While in the scientific article the procedure and results are the main elements of the study that are disclosed, the intervention may have produced far more noteworthy outcomes beyond the hypothesized effects. This might include increases in participants' motivations towards schoolwork, greater social cohesion or practical issues resolved (e.g., conflicts at the class level). To motivate schools, the intervention may have resulted in material produced by participants, diplomas for participating children awarded in a ceremony, and an event to involve students, parents, communities and media. Sometimes, what is behind (and around) a study can be of as much if not more importance than specific scientific findings. We want to give voice to these experiences, which can inspire researchers who may be grappling with similar processes, and to foreground the community and societal relevance of applied scholarship.

Finally, we still believe in a better world, and in the role of social and community psychology in creating it. The *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* wants to be home to scholars and practitioners who share this perspective.

KEYWORDS

applied social psychology, community psychology, social psychology

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