

## Editing *Personal Relationships*.

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### **Abstract:**

This issue is the last my editorial team will produce. Lorne Campbell and his associate editors have been receiving new submissions since June 1, 2008, and the next issue will be filled with manuscripts they have processed since that time. Soon after I first began receiving new submissions on June 1, 2005, Distinguished Scholar Harry Reis (*Personal Relationships*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, March 2007) responded to an email from me by asking a question provoked by the title under my signature, “Editor of *Personal Relationships*.” “What does that mean?” he wrote. He, of course, was joking and wanted to know how I edited them. At the time I responded by subsequently italicizing the name of the journal in my email signature. In this preface, however, the two editorial assistants who worked with me over the course of my term and I try to answer his question seriously. To do so, we describe what it meant to us to edit the journal, *Personal Relationships*, and how we and the rest of our editorial team interpreted our job.

**Keywords:** academic publishing | journal editing | academic research | psychology research | personal relationships | psychology

### **Article:**

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Throughout our term, our editorial team strived to shape the development of the field by soliciting and nurturing submissions from scholars from a wide variety of countries, disciplines, and stages of career and especially those submitted by research teams representing the diversity of our field. To increase the impact of personal relationships scholarship, to encourage press coverage of the findings reported in our journal, and to recruit members from underrepresented disciplines to submit, our editorial policies were also designed to help authors write for a diverse audience of scholars and to state the relevance of their findings for a wider public. To these ends we recruited a diverse Editorial Board, sought input from Ad Hoc and New Scholar Reviewers from a variety of countries and disciplines, offered sessions at the International Association for Relationship Research (IARR) meetings on international and interdisciplinary scholarship, worked with Wiley-Blackwell on ad campaigns designed to recruit a broad readership, increased the number of press releases from two to four per year, shared contact information for submitters who did not belong to IARR with the IARR Membership Chair, and selected distinguished scholars representing different countries, disciplines, and to a certain extent, stages of career. Although we did not structure the process to encourage scholars to submit articles on a wide variety of relationships, we hoped they would. It is very gratifying to write a preface for this issue of *Personal Relationships*, our last issue, and to report that the authors of the articles comprising it represent a wide variety of countries and disciplines, include scholars who were students or not members of IARR when they originally submitted their manuscripts, and studied a wide variety of types of personal relationships.

The authors of the articles in this issue, which are published in the order in which they were submitted, include scholars from seven countries. Esther S. Kluwer, Maureen Tumewu, and Kees van den Bos, authors of “Men's and Women's Reactions to Fair and Unfair Treatment in Relationship Conflict,” are all from the Netherlands. Although her co-authors, Amy Holtzworth-Munroe, Katherine Herron, and Kahni Clements are from the United States, the first author of “‘My Way or No Way’: Anarchic Power, Relationship Satisfaction, and Male Violence,” Uzma S. Rehman, resides in Canada. Bart Soenens and Maarten Vansteenkiste are both from Belgium, and their co-author on “Should Parental Prohibition of Adolescents' Peer Relationships be Prohibited?,” Christopher P. Niemiec, lives in the United States. Jurgita Babarskiene and Roger G. Tweed, the authors of “Marital Adjustment in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe: A Focus on Lithuania,” hail from Lithuania and Canada, respectively. Finally, three of the authors of “Roots and Correlates of Perceived Injustice in the Division of Family Work,” Gerold Mikula, Sonja Jagoditsch, and Silvia Macher, are from Austria, and the article's second author, Dominik Schoebi, is from Switzerland.

The disciplinary homes of the authors whose work is published in this issue vary and many of the articles are the product of interdisciplinary collaboration. Eight of the 12 were co-authored by at least one scholar from outside of a psychology department. Although Rehman (see above) works in a department of psychology, her coauthors are in a department of psychological and brain sciences and a department of psychiatry and human behavior. Victoria C. Plaut, Glenn

Adams, and Stephanie L. Anderson, authors of “Does Attractiveness Buy Happiness? ‘It Depends on Where You’re From’,” are all members of psychology faculties, but Plaut is currently visiting a jurisprudence and social policy department in a law school. Brooke C. Feeney and two of her co-authors on “Affiliation with New Peer Acquaintances During Two Initial Social Support Interactions,” Jude Cassidy and Edward P. Lemay, Jr., are both in psychology departments, but their fourth author, Fatima Ramos-Marcuse, works in a school of nursing. Jennifer S. Priem, first author of “Accuracy and Bias in Perceptions of Emotionally Supportive Communication in Marriage” is in a school of human ecology, and her two co-authors, Denise Haunani Solomon and Keli Ryan Steuber, are in communication studies departments. The authors of “Friends' Sexual Orientation, Relational Quality, and Mental Health Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth” work in three different types of contexts: Koji Ueno is in a sociology department, Mathew D. Gayman in a health services research center, and Eric R. Wright and Steven D. Quantz in a school of environmental affairs. Amy Janan Johnson, Michel M. Haigh, Elizabeth A. Craig, Jennifer A. H. Becker, authors of “Relational Closeness: Comparing Undergraduate College Students' Geographically Close and Long-Distance Friendships,” are all communication scholars, and Jason D. Hans and Marilyn Coleman, authors of “The Experiences of Remarried Stepfathers Who Pay Child Support,” are both in family studies departments.

This issue includes work by new scholars and established authors from outside the close-knit IARR organization. This bodes well for the expansion of the field. For example, Mike Matamoros, co-author with Robert W. Fuhrman and Dorothy Flannagan on “Behavior Expectations in Cross-Sex Friendships, Same-Sex Friendships and Romantic Relationships,” was a student when they first submitted their manuscript. The article first-authored by Hans (see above) was based on his dissertation. In addition to these two authors, at least nine more were students when they first submitted their manuscripts including Anderson, Clements, Craig, Gayman, Jagoditsch, Niemiec, Priem, Steuber, and Tumewu. Even more impressive, 28 of the 40 contributors did not belong to IARR when they submitted their manuscripts.

During our editorial term, most of the articles our team accepted focused on romantic relationships or marriage. Four entire issues out of the 12 we produced were devoted to this type of relationship (Volume 14, Issue 3; Volume 15, Issue 3; Volume 16, Issues 1 and 3). Although in a previous preface the contributions that are possible by studying one type of relationship in depth are discussed (Adams, *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 16, Issue 1, March 2009), it is also clear that studying more than one type of personal relationship and comparing findings, either across studies or within the same one, is important. It is therefore very exciting to note the diversity of relationship topics addressed in this issue. It is particularly pleasing to note that three articles which focus on friendship are included in this issue, as well as articles on peer relationships and parent-child relationships.

If this issue were the sole measure of the success of our editorial policy and considerable efforts, we would indeed be celebrating with abandon. Unfortunately, however, the overall results of our

efforts to shape the development of the field suggest that such a celebration would be premature. As discussed below, some of the news is good, some is mixed, some is bad, some is expected, and some is surprising.

### **Submissions Rate Up and Acceptance Rate Down: Good News**

During the three years during which we received submissions, we received a total of 484, an average of 161 per year, which is substantially more than the 100 to 120 that Susan Sprecher, the Editor who preceded me, received each year of her term. Although our acceptance rate varied from 17% to 24% over the six six-month periods of our active term, it averaged 20% and so was on the low end of the range she said to expect (20–25%).

### **International Submissions Up but Acceptance Rate for International Scholars Lower: Mixed News**

Of the 484 submissions we received, 185 were first-authored by scholars from outside the United States and another 17 included co-authors from outside the United States for a total of 202 or 45% of all submissions. Nineteen percent of the first authors were from Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand; another 6% were from Israel and the Netherlands; and 13% were from other countries where English is not spoken as widely. During the first year of our term, approximately 30% of the first-author submitters were from outside the United States; that percentage was higher (40%) during the next year and a half of our term and finally increased to 50% during the last 6 months we accepted new submissions. An examination of the trend in submissions that included any author from a country outside the United State tells the same story: the percentage increased from 35% of all submissions during the first six months of our term to 54% during the last six months.

We were clearly successful in increasing the number of submissions from diverse countries, but we were less successful in transforming submissions from underrepresented countries into accepted publications. The acceptance rate for the three years of our term for first-author submitters from the United States was 22%. The comparable rates for first-author submitters from other countries was 16%, but it varied across type of country: Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand (16%); Israel and the Netherlands (26%); and other countries where English is not widely spoken (13%). Although our data on authors other than the first ones are less reliable, the same difference in acceptance rates between the United States and other countries exists even when the countries of all authors are considered.

### **Submissions, from Non-Psychologists Down and Acceptance Rate for Them Lower: Bad News**

Approximately two-thirds of submissions and articles accepted for publication in *Personal Relationships* are authored by psychologists. Although the percentage of all submissions which were first-authored by psychologists varied somewhat over our editorial term, this percentage

went up if it changed significantly at all (64% during the first half year of our term and 71% during the last half year of our term). The trend for submissions that were authored exclusively by psychologists is no more encouraging: the comparable figures are 58% and 68%. The percentages of first authors of submissions who were Human Development and Family Studies (7%), Communication Studies (11%), or other non-Psychologist scholars (15%) were quite small, as were the percentages of all authors of submissions from these underrepresented disciplines. Furthermore, the acceptance rate is higher for psychologists (22%) than those for scholars from Human Development and Family Studies (18%), Communication Studies (20%), and other disciplines (14%).

### **Submissions from Students High and Acceptance Rate Lower: Expected News**

During the first two years of our term, approximately one third of all submissions were first-authored by students; during the last year of our term, approximately one quarter of all submissions were. The acceptance rate for papers first-authored by students was a bit lower (18%) than for papers first-authored by non-students (21%). The pattern is similar when the acceptance rates are compared for articles on which there is at least one student author (20%) to those on which there are no student authors (21%).

### **Submission Rates by Non-IARR Members Very High and Acceptance Rate Very Low: Surprising News**

Much to our surprise, when we examined the statistics on whether authors belonged to IARR, we discovered that 72% of the 484 first authors who submitted manuscripts during the three years of our term were not members. The percentage actually increased during our term from 66% during our first half year to 79% during our last half year. The overall acceptance rate was much higher for IARR members (37%) than for non-members (14%); during some half years it was approximately four times as high and during others it was only approximately twice as high.

### **Concluding Comments**

So although the submission rate is up and the acceptance rate is down, work remains to be done. We seem to have made some progress in the international arena—submissions are up, but because the acceptance rate for international scholars is lower than for other scholars we must continue to explore new ways to nurture manuscripts from around the globe from submission to acceptance. The news on interdisciplinary personal relationships scholarship is less hopeful—non-psychologists are not submitting as frequently as they used to submit and the acceptance rate for them is lower than for psychologists. This situation is complex and is partially structural. Most personal relationship reviewers are psychologists. Even though the last two editors have been sociologists and each submission was reviewed by members of at least two disciplines, the psychological paradigm clearly prevails. The problem is not only structural, however. It became quite apparent during our term that many non-psychologists were not submitting their best work to *Personal Relationships* and probably will not until the journal is read and cited more

frequently outside of psychology. The news on the high numbers of submissions from students and non-IARR members bodes well for the growth of the field. It is to be expected that the acceptance rate for students is lower than the acceptance rate for established scholars, but the low acceptance rate for scholarship by non-IARR members is as troubling as the low acceptance rate among non-psychologists. Although these two groups with relatively high rejection rates overlap, they are not identical. It is possible that both groups tend to save their better submissions for journals more familiar to them or that even their best work does not meet the expectations of personal relationship scholars.

It is admittedly with some regret that we note the signs of growth of the field of personal relationships, because well, the larger it gets, the less personal it will be. During our term, the members of our editorial team, including the Editor, Editorial Assistants, and Associate Editors Susan D. Boon, Susan Branje, Rodney M. Cate, Catrin Finkenauer, Mario Mikulincer, and Denise Haunani Solomon, have become friends in spite of our geographic, disciplinary, and stage-of-career differences. We have also grown to know and appreciate our Editorial Board (who are listed inside the front cover of this issue) and our reviewers (the most recent of whom are acknowledged at the end of this issue). We have celebrated together and comforted each other. We have experienced many changes in our own personal relationships and have supported our authors as they have experienced changes in theirs as well. Many of the authors who contributed to Volume 16 shared some of these changes with us. For example, during this process, Fen-Fang Tsai became engaged, as did Chris Niemiec, and Jennifer Priem married, as did Natacha Godbout. Kristi Williams, Brian Ogolesky, Amy Janan Johnson, Jennifer A. H. Becker, Maarten Vansteenkiste all found out they were expecting children or had them. Others celebrated wedding anniversaries, including Jennifer Bevan (5 years), Judi Walsh (5 years), Brad Sagarin (10 years), Diane Holmberg (19 years), and Distinguished Scholar Ted Huston (42 years; *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 16, Issue 3). And as our first distinguished scholar Harry Reis reminded us, some of us have lost close friends and family members as well. We were particularly saddened by the passing of Larry Kurdek, one of the authors who has published in *PR* most frequently and one of our most responsive Editorial Board members. Our editorial team will miss the constant virtual contact with each other and with our reviewers and authors, but look forward to reunions at future IARR meetings.

On behalf of the editorial team of *Personal Relationships*,

REBECCA G. ADAMS Editor

SARAH S. HOSMAN Editorial Assistant and

BRANDI M. MCCULLOUGH Former Editorial Assistant