Marginalizing the *Journal of Applied Psychology*?

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Is *Journal of Applied Psychology* (*JAP*) being marginalized? To many readers, this may seem a silly question. After all, evidence clearly demonstrates that *JAP* is the premier journal in I-O psychology. Zickar and Highhouse (2001) surveyed SIOP members about the reputation of 23 of the most prestigious journals that are outlets for I-O research. In both psychology departments and business schools, *JAP* was the highest-rated journal. Zickar and Highhouse concluded, “It is clear that *JAP* is the flagship journal for I-O psychologists. Across all indexes, *JAP* scored highest” (p. 35). For those of us in I-O who hold *JAP* in the highest esteem, one may ask—what’s the problem? Am I suggesting a problem that does not in reality exist?

I think not. The problem is that there are efforts afoot in business schools to marginalize *JAP*. I should note that some of my colleagues in psychology departments have commented that some non-I-O psychology faculty view *JAP* as inferior to other American Psychological Association (APA) journals. Though this is equally alarming where it occurs, I think the “*JAP* problem” is especially profound in business schools, (though the facts I provide below should be useful to psychology department faculty if they need to convince some non-I-O faculty of *JAP*’s quality).

Trieschmann, Dennis, Northcraft, and Niemi (2000) have published an article that ranks the research productivity of business schools, including management departments. *JAP* (as well as *Personnel Psychology* and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*) is excluded from the list of journals used to rank management department productivity. Though not reported in the article itself, on their Web page, the authors defend this decision on the grounds that “we excluded journals published by organizations with ‘home’ discipline outside of the business school.” This dubious rationale is belied by the fact that, in 2001, *JAP* published as many articles from business school faculty as from psychology department faculty.

It is hard to understand why Trieschmann et al. (2000) made the decisions they did. It is true these authors have rarely published in *JAP* (cumulatively twice). It is also true that two of the authors’ universities fared quite well in their rankings (Illinois 9th, Indiana 18th), whereas some of the best business schools in publishing I-O research—e.g., Iowa, Michigan State, and Maryland—were mired in 54th, 30th, and 31st place, respectively. Perhaps the

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1 Author Note: Though I have published in *JAP* and serve on the editorial review board, the views expressed herein should not be construed as official commentary from *JAP*, its editors, SIOP, or APA. These are my views only. I thank Murray Barrick, Daniel Cable, Jason Colquitt and Debra Major for comments on an earlier version of this article.
basic reason is that these authors, and many others in business schools, hold the implicit view that I-O psychology has no proper place in management department research.

If this were an obscure article that was little noticed, there would not be much reason for concern. However, not only did the article garner considerable attention when it was published, the authors continue to actively promote their rankings: They have their own Web site (http://www.kelley.indiana.edu/ardennis/rankings/), the list is widely circulated among business school deans, and several schools are sending out promotional materials that tout their ranking on the list. Trieschmann et al. (2000) have updated their rankings and this 2002 update also is being widely circulated. Business school deans, and some faculty, are using this information to appraise the research productivity of faculty. I have witnessed conversations in which these rankings have influenced individuals' thinking regarding the journals to which they will send their work. To be sure, some business school deans and many management department faculty are unfazed by these rankings and the efforts to market them. But it is also true that they have affected many deans and faculty and will continue to do so in the future. Furthermore, two influential publications, Business Week and The Chronicle of Higher Education, are about to rank management departments based on research productivity, and JAP also is missing from these lists.

Although few of you who read this column question the quality or impact of JAP, I hope that some of the information I share below will be useful to you in informing deans and colleagues about the reputation and impact of JAP among management and psychology journals.

• APA publishes 26 of the most highly regarded journals in psychology, including Psychological Bulletin, Psychological Review, Journal of Experimental Psychology, Journal of Abnormal Psychology, and Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP). In terms of number of submissions, JAP is the second most popular APA journal (503 submissions in 2001), surpassed only by JPSP (676 submissions), which is published in three sections. Based on submissions received this year, as reported to me by the current JAP editor, Sheldon Zedeck, JAP may be on pace to receive more submissions in 2002 than any other APA journal, including JPSP.

• In terms of acceptance rate, out of the 26 APA journals, the only journals with lower acceptance rates than JAP (16%) are Psychological Review (9%) and Psychological Assessment (12%) (both get far fewer submissions than JAP). JAP is more selective than JPSP, Psychological Bulletin, Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, and the 21 other APA journals.

• Tahai and Myer (1999), in a study of 65 management journals (including Academy of Management Journal [AMJ], Academy of Management
Review [AMR], and Administrative Science Quarterly [ASQ]), found that JAP was the top-ranked journal in terms of citation rates. Alarmingly, these authors excluded JAP from further analyses because its editor was “a psychology professor” whereas they included Personnel Psychology on the grounds that its editors are “primarily management professors” (p. 285). By the way, Personnel Psychology placed a respectable ninth on this list and OBHDP was a lofty fourth.

- Glick, McKelvey, Cooper, Huber, and Zmud (1997) surveyed 90 “prolific micro-OB scholars” as well as 137 management department chairs regarding the reputation of 44 management journals. Among the management department chairs, JAP was ranked 4th (behind AMJ, AMR, and ASQ). Among the prolific OB scholars, JAP ranked first.
- JAP was named one of the “Journals of the Century” in applied psychology, based on a comprehensive analysis of previous journal rankings, citations of the journals, and the amount of time a journal has impacted the field (Major & Cardenas, 2002).

One response may be to shrug our collective shoulders with the belief that poorly conceived efforts to diminish JAP’s value are unworthy of our attention. To do so is to ignore that reputation matters. If JAP is the flagship I-O journal, what is thought about JAP reflects on us all. What can we do?

- As I-O psychologists, we have a responsibility to use the facts to educate others regarding the high quality of JAP. Clearly, JAP deserves its lofty reputation, and those who disagree should be made aware of the evidence.
- Perhaps SIOP should publish its own list of the most productive I-O psychology departments and the most productive management departments. Such a list could buffer the effect of these other lists.
- APA might consider its own marketing efforts regarding JAP. The APA journals are the scientific front of psychology, and promoting them to constituent groups can only enhance their reputation.

Some may see this as “sour grapes.” After all, my department did not fare particularly well in the Trieschmann et al. (2000) rankings (#56). I wish to emphasize, though, that our department considers the journals designated by Trieschmann et al. to be top-tier journals (AMJ, AMR, ASQ), in addition to JAP, Personnel Psychology, and OBHDP. The point is that micro journals must be afforded the same status in rankings as more macro-oriented management journals and held with the same high regard as the best journals in psychology. Furthermore, those who marginalize the importance of JAP (and other top journals such as Personnel Psychology and OBHDP) diminish the value of I-O psychology, something that should be of concern to all of us.
References


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