

## EDITORIAL

# Journal Vitality, Intellectual Integrity, and the Problems of McEthics

JENNIFER J. FREYD, PhD

*Department of Psychology, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, USA*

Good things have been happening to the *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* (*JTD*). In this editorial, I first report on a number of these excellent developments. I also discuss one new concern for *JTD*—plagiarism in some submitted articles—that has come to light because of new detection methods. This consideration of intellectual integrity leads me to some more general thoughts about superficiality in the evaluation of intellectual contributions and in ethics education.

### JOURNAL VITALITY

This editorial is appearing in our very first *JTD* Issue Number 5. Beginning with Volume 12, published in 2011, *JTD*'s frequency increased from four to five issues per year, a sign of our vitality. This year we have also migrated from a purely e-mail-based submission process to submission through ScholarOne Manuscripts™, a Web-based submission portal provided by Taylor & Francis. Between October 2010 (when we went live with ScholarOne) and June 2011, we had more than twice as many new submissions (not including revisions, special issue papers, book reviews, or invited papers) as we had between October 2009 and June 2010. Thus, even with the increase in the number of issues, it is easy to fill our journal with high-quality papers.

I realize that editors are supposed to boast about their rejection rates, as if high levels of rejection prove one's superiority, but in my ideal world I would never have to turn away a deserving submission. I would rather

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Received 29 June 2011.

Address correspondence to Jennifer J. Freyd, PhD, Department of Psychology, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1227. E-mail: jjf@uoregon.edu

we receive exactly the perfect number of high-quality submissions for the space available. However, we increasingly have to turn away meritorious submissions. Although this gives us the luxury of being able to select the very best from the set of good submissions, it means that some excellent work is not getting published in *JTD*. If this trend continues we will consider expanding our capacity further.

In addition to increases in the frequency of publication and the adoption of ScholarOne for submissions, another truly excellent development for *JTD* is our selection by Taylor & Francis to be one of the first of its journals to use the iFirst publication method. With iFirst, shortly after a paper is accepted by our editorial offices for publication, the author's final draft is posted as an Accepted Manuscript (AM) in unedited form to Taylor & Francis Online (the online platform that replaced Taylor & Francis's Informaworld in June 2011). Taylor & Francis then moves the article through the normal production process—including copyediting, typesetting, and proof reviewing—and the article is published in a particular *JTD* issue. When final publication occurs, the Version of Record replaces the AM version on Taylor & Francis Online. This rapid publication of accepted articles means that other scholars do not need to wait for papers to appear in final published form before being able to access the material, thus increasing the rate at which readers can become aware of new and groundbreaking science and ideas. This is also superb news for authors and the journal because it means that we are better able to contribute to the field and be noticed by others for that contribution.

More very good news for *JTD* is the creation of an annual award for the best article published in our journal. This award includes a cash prize made possible by Taylor & Francis. We are very grateful to Sean Beppler of Taylor & Francis for initiating and supporting the Richard P. Kluft Award for *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 2010 Best Article, sponsored by Routledge, beginning with the 2010 Best Article selected in the spring of 2011. Bethany Brand, PhD, was the chair of the Award Committee that reviewed the many nominations received from the *JTD* Editorial Board. Brand, who will serve again as chair for the 2011 Award Committee, reports that the decision was difficult because of the wide range of important topics and intriguing research published in our journal during 2010. The 2010 Richard P. Kluft Award for Best Article in the *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* went to Yu et al. (2010) for their paper "Dissociative Disorders Among Chinese Inpatients Diagnosed with Schizophrenia." According to the Award Committee, "This team deserves the *JTD* Award for Best Publication in 2010 because of the importance of investigating the extent to which dissociative disorders occur across cultures. . . . This study provides compelling evidence against the sociocognitive and iatrogenic models of dissociative disorders." Three additional excellent articles received Honorable Mentions from the Award Committee: Littleton (2010), Seng (2010), and Roberts, Watlington, Nett, and

Batten (2010). We look forward to the selection of the Richard P. Kluff Award for *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 2011 Best Article winners.

Not surprisingly, given all of these excellent developments, the influence and visibility of *JTD* continues to grow. Our selection for indexing in Medline is certainly beneficial to our impact. Similarly, as I reported here last year (Freyd, 2010), we were notified in January 2010 that *JTD* had been selected for indexing by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) for its influential Social Science Citation Index and “Web of Science.” In June 2011, *JTD* received from ISI its first full Journal Impact Factor (JIF) of .78. This reflects the number of citations (42) in 2010 articles (in ISI-indexed journals) to *JTD* articles published in 2008 and 2009 divided by the total number of articles (54) published in *JTD* in 2008 and 2009. I am pleased that our first JIF is respectable, though I continue to have serious concerns about the misuse of bibliometric analyses such as the JIF (Freyd, 2009). At the same time, there are clearly numerous benefits of being indexed in ISI’s Web of Science and Social Science Citation Index. Most important among those benefits is the opportunity to increase our true intellectual impact because of the increased visibility of our journal.

The number of subscriptions continues to increase, even in this era of library cancellations. Similarly, the total number of electronic downloads of *JTD* content rose from around 13,000 in 2009 to more than 23,000 in 2010. Since the beginning of 2009, usage of *JTD* has increased every quarter through the first quarter of 2011. Individuals from 55 different countries accessed *JTD* content. A total of 43 articles were downloaded more than 100 times in 2010 alone, and 395 unique items were downloaded. The average article was used 45 times. There has been growth in the use of *JTD* content both at the top and on average.

#### INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY: GUARDING AGAINST PLAGIARISM IN *JTD*

Although most of the developments for *JTD* over the past year have been superb, one significant concern regarding intellectual integrity has come to light. As I mentioned, beginning in the fall of 2010 *JTD* started receiving new regular submissions via ScholarOne, an online submission portal provided by Taylor & Francis. In addition to providing automated support for the peer review process and editorial workflow, ScholarOne makes detecting plagiarism and self-plagiarism easy. Using CrossCheck™ software accessible from the ScholarOne site we can routinely screen submissions for originality of text. CrossCheck compares the submitted manuscript with a large corpus of previously published works and then provides a report detailing any

discovered overlap. When people submit papers on our Web portal they get this message:

This site uses CrossCheck software to screen papers for unoriginal material. Please note that by submitting your paper to *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* you are agreeing to any necessary checks your paper may have to undergo during our peer review and production processes.

Unfortunately and disturbingly, several of the first 40 submissions we submitted to CrossCheck had to be withdrawn because of overlap with published papers by the same or different authors. The range of overlap varied a great deal from a relatively small number of exactly worded sentences in the Methods section to entire uncited paragraphs throughout the paper. Although it is permissible to reuse unquoted a bit of one's own prior wording in Methods sections if the original work is appropriately acknowledged (e.g., with phrases such as "as I have previously described"), taking other authors' phrasing or ideas without citation is plagiarism. All authors are required to read and sign our Author Assurance Form as part of the submission process. This assurance form includes a number of separate guarantees made by the author, including the guarantee that the work is original and that correct and thorough citation is employed. The fact that some submitting authors sign this assurance and nonetheless submit duplicated material is particularly disturbing. Although the CrossCheck results have been alarming to us, it is good that we now have a tool to check and thus help ensure the intellectual integrity and originality of the journal.

#### INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY REQUIRES INTELLECTUALITY

Plagiarism is not the only issue of intellectual integrity relevant to us as scientists and scholars. Although it seems self-evident that intellectual integrity is of paramount importance to the long-run success of science and scholarship, there are threats to this integrity not only from individual practitioners who may be dangerously careless or dishonest but also from institutional structures that reward superficial achievement rather than deep contributions. One way this occurs is by focusing on numerical metrics for achievement at the expense of engaging with the intellectual content. The single most egregious error of this sort occurs when hiring and promotion committees use JIFs to evaluate the merit of a single article or scientist. This is akin to using the ranking of a university to evaluate the quality of a doctoral dissertation of a particular individual at that university. Not only does this misuse the metric itself (which reflects average citations and says nothing about one particular article), but it lets an outside process (one that is subject to numerous market forces) trump actual comprehension and evaluation of the content.

Using citation counts for an individual candidate in the hiring or promotion process is incrementally better than using JIFs, but it still abrogates a duty as well as is technically problematic because citation counts may be determined by highly superficial factors such as the size of the scholarly community for that research area, referencing habits, and the rate at which ISI (a private corporation) indexes journals in that field.

Relying on grant support to evaluate the worth of a candidate is similarly problematic: It may mean basing a decision in part on political trends that influence the ideology of funding agencies. For instance, an ideology that prefers to see genes or other biological causes as the basis of social ills may result in funding priorities that heavily reward research that seeks genetic bases and biological interventions over social causes and solutions for human emotional suffering. Perhaps even more insidiously, using grant support as evidence of worth may be confusing an end goal (research contribution) with a method to achieve that end (funding)—or it may mean accepting that the acquisition of money is an end itself.

Whenever important decisions are being made about the worth of something intellectual, it is essential for the ultimate intellectual integrity of the endeavor that the evaluators grapple with the substance of that work rather than fall back on secondhand numbers. The final irony is that to reward the accumulation of fame and fortune over actual intellectual achievement is ultimately counterproductive to even the goal of increasing visibility and resources because it destructively shifts motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic goals.

### ETHICAL INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH ALSO REQUIRES INTELLECTUALITY

Institutions also establish practices that encourage or discourage integrity in ethical decision making. One domain in which this occurs is the oversight and review of research with human participants. As is well known, researchers studying the behavior of humans typically must submit their research protocols to institutional ethics review boards (IRBs) in order to carry out their research. Beginning a few years ago, many researchers have also been required by their institutions to complete regular mandatory “education” in research ethics. Although the intentions of these requirements are surely good, the resulting implementation has created a new industry of mind-numbing online ethics training and testing.

My own institution, like many others, requires all researchers to regularly complete testing using Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI; [www.citiprogram.org/](http://www.citiprogram.org/)) software. The problem is that passing the CITI tests is neither sufficient nor necessary for ethical behavior. Rather, this method of education and testing is so superficial and coercive that it is arguably

counterproductive, promoting a false sense of security and even breeding cynicism. The information presented in the curriculum includes some valuable points, numerous irrelevant details, and a nontrivial amount of incorrect information and opinion labeled as fact. This information is then tested through multiple-choice quizzes shortly after presentation so that no long-term retention is required. The only thinking occurs when disputable information is presented and tested; then the researcher must select between purposely entering a wrong answer in order to pass the test or possibly failing the test and thus being unable to do research.

Furthermore, it is considered permissible by many research communities for researchers to scan the CITI study materials while completing the quiz, thus requiring no retention of study materials even in the short run. In still other research communities, answer sheets are circulated. Although these strategies are obviously against the rules and arguably unethical, the rates of such cheating are apparently very high, probably in part because researchers consider the whole endeavor a foolish waste of time and in part because people will conform to what they believe is normative no matter if it is technically prohibited. It is ironic that an education initiative focused on ethics promotes such unethical behavior. There is very little intellectual integrity in the CITI educational experience from the perspective of either the testing itself or the behavior of the test takers.

Although knowledge is necessary, ethical behavior in research fundamentally involves motivation, problem solving, and sometimes difficult cost-benefit analyses. What we need instead is a meaningful and intellectually honest educational experience: engage in a debate; serve on the IRB; conduct a study on research ethics. Like many of my colleagues I complete the required CITI training because I must in order to be allowed to conduct research, but each time I go through this process I come out feeling like I've been force-fed a high-fat, low-nutrition meal at McEthics.

### THE BRIGHT SIDE

Given that so many researchers are forced to endure hypocritical CITI (or similar) testing for "education" in ethical behavior, it is perhaps remarkable that we do not discover more plagiarism in our submissions. Despite the problems of McEvaluations and McEthics, intellectual integrity is deeply valued and upheld by most of our community. In fact, most of our *JTD* submissions are original, creative, and honest. It is my great privilege to read these submissions and select a subset of them for publication in *JTD*.

In closing I want to welcome four new editorial board members for Volume 13: Chris Brewin, PhD, Valerie Edwards, PhD, Jeff Todahl, PhD, and Eileen Zurbriggen, PhD. Board members Bethany Brand, PhD, and Julian Ford, PhD, have been appointed as new Associate Editors for Volume 13,

joining continuing Associate Editors Jon Allen, PhD, and Laura Brown, PhD. David Gleaves, PhD, who has ably served the journal as an Associate Editor for many years, has joined Catherine Classen, PhD, and Cheryl Koopman, PhD, as an Associate Editor, Statistics, beginning with Volume 13. Our editorial offices are busy preparing Volume 13 (to be published in 2012). For this task, and for the vitality of the journal, we rely heavily on our talented and dedicated Associate Editors and Editorial Board, and we thank them and our ad hoc reviewers.

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