

Editorial

Christopher J. Hopwood¹ 

[1] *Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland.*

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Corresponding Author: Christopher J. Hopwood, Binzmuehlestrasse 14, 8050 Zurich, Switzerland. E-mail: hopwood@psychologie.uzh.ch

I did not write an editorial with the launch of PHAIR, as is often the custom, both because the vision and scope of the journal are laid out in detail on our submission website and because I wanted to coincide my editorial with the first Ombudsperson's report, which is being published simultaneously. Here I wish to briefly review the status of the journal and respond to that report.

I am happy to have recruited a very strong board of Associate and Consulting Editors and am grateful to have the opportunity to thank them publicly for their high quality albeit unpaid service here. I would also like to thank the team at PsychOpen GOLD and the Leibniz Institute for making it possible to have a journal that is committed to strong scientific practices, and which is free to both publish in and access for anyone in the world without a paywall.

At the time of this writing, the journal has published fourteen papers across three volumes. Among these, three were review papers and eleven were empirical reports, and one of these was a registered report. I perceive the quality of these papers as excellent. Overall, I believe the journal is off to a very strong start.

I would like to further thank the Ombudsperson team, who were not only unpaid, they also have no particular interest in the topic. I picked each of them because I respect their scientific integrity and asked them (as described in detail in their report) to review the papers we have published for bias. They play an important role because our journal takes an explicit animal justice, anti-speciesist position, and science conducted from this point of view is often subject to accusations of bias that are sometimes fair and other times unfair. Given that we are the least likely to see our own blind spots, the Ombudsperson team play a critical role in ensuring the quality of the journal. They reviewed the first eight papers published in the first two volumes.



I was naturally pleased with their overall finding that there was no systematic bias in those papers, and that they judged the issues they did identify as similar to those they might find in comparable outlets on different topics. They noted two general themes.

The first had to do with language that reflects underlying values, and included as potentially problematic examples “murder”, “exploitation”, “speciesist” and “specieicism”. They suggested that each article could include a brief section where the authors express their own attitudes toward the article’s subject matter. My editorial take on this issue is that we should be thoughtful about word choices, but also that the values of our journal are explicit. As noted in my instructions to the Ombudsperson’s team, this is analogous to the value that journals focused on schizophrenia have that schizophrenia is a public health problem and that research published in the journal should be aimed at trying to reduce symptoms associated with that diagnosis. One could imagine a journal that takes the position that schizophrenia is not problematic and seeks to publish research on its upsides; one does not have to imagine journals that are explicitly or implicitly speciesist, because there are many currently being published. I have three reactions to the Ombudsperson’s teams suggestions. First, I agree that whatever one might argue about the validity of a word from their own perspective, certain words tend to produce more heat than light and should be avoided. Murder and exploitation would typically fall in that category. Second, speciesism would not because this is a legitimate construct of interest to researchers in this space; I invite studies on the correlates, antecedents, mechanisms, and consequences of speciesism at the journal. Third, as editor I assume that authors share the explicit animal-justice values described on our website; we would consider the value of saying more about that in a given submission, but do not think this is necessary as standard practice.

The second issue had to do with overclaiming, both in the sense of claiming beyond the findings of an empirical study and of claiming beyond the support present in the literature. I am very grateful to the team for being thorough in pointing out specific instances in papers we have published. As researchers, we are all prone to make claims that go beyond the data in our study or in the literature, and one of the roles of editors and reviewers is to help us stay as close to evidence as possible. The Ombudsperson team noted that this type of overclaiming is common in science and that the incidence in the papers they reviewed did not surpass what they would expect of other journals. However, we would like to bat 1.000 in this area, and I hope this report will put gentle pressure on me, our editorial team, and authors to keep our eyes on the ball.

The report had good suggestions about how to diversify the Ombudsperson team, and I plan to take this advice when I assemble a new team to review the next set of papers in the journal in the future. Until then, I remain grateful for the responsibility PHAIR has given me and to the efforts of everyone involved in making the journal a success, and look forward to receiving your submissions.



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