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Early Career experiences of navigating journal article publication: lessons learnt using an autoethnographic approach

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Abstract: The successful publication of peer-reviewed academic journal articles is an essential achievement for early career researchers (ECRs) seeking to establish themselves in their profession. However, this journey can pose a number of significant challenges for ECRs. Using an autoethnographic approach, we sought to capture our recent and current experiences of negotiating the academic journal article publication journey to explore the tensions, contradictions and benefits encountered in the journey. We explore challenges we experienced in choosing a target journal and negotiating the follow-up process; undertaking revisions; and our experiences of limitations and possibilities in peer-review and editorial support. We seek to contribute to improvement in the quality of the scholarly publishing experience for ECRs and publishers, and explore possible gaps to be filled in doctoral and ECR training. We hope that our paper also serves an educative capacity, providing some insight into possibilities and challenges involved in writing journal articles early in the academic career.

- ECRs may need to access implicit knowledge as well as explicit author guidelines in order to identify and liaise with target journals.
- Learning how to perform revisions is a complex skill set for ECRs to acquire.
- Both supportive peer-review cultures established by editors and opportunities to engage in peer review can improve ECRs' understanding of the peer review process.

Introduction

The successful publication of peer-reviewed academic journal articles is an essential achievement for early career researchers (ECRs). The influence of the academic publication industry "has never been greater because it is through publication that knowledge is constructed, academics are evaluated, universities are funded, and careers are built, and each year its influence becomes ever more intrusive and demanding" (Hyland, 2016, p. 58). Pressures to publish are further compounded by the increasingly unstable nature of employment in academia (Guthrie, Parker & Dumay, 2015). To strengthen their capacity to compete for ongoing academic positions, ECRs must perform strongly across performance measurement indicators and research rankings (e.g. Osterloh & Frey, 2014), and their early career status is not necessarily taken into account in this evaluation. The quantity and quality of academic publications typically form a key component of performance and impact measurements for academics (e.g. Diem & Wolter, 2013). ECRs who are seeking to secure tenure and vocational security cannot be blind to the role academic publications play in an environment characterised by "increasing attempts to quantify and compare research output" (Berelmann & Haucapp, 2015, p. 1109).

ECRs may also wish to publish in quality journals in order to develop a range of skills and competencies. Early career publication can help ECRs develop an academic authorial voice, and enable research to be accessed by other academics through dissemination, but also to support broader strategies of research translation, where new knowledge leads directly to practical applications (e.g. Woolf, 2008). Through publication, ECRs can actively contribute to the research conversation and test challenging and new ideas in this space, benefiting from critical feedback which is essential for intellectual growth, and establishing research expertise (Merga, 2015). While the peer-reviewed journal article is not the only acceptable or encouraged academic output, it retains primacy (Mason & Merga, 2018; Nicholas et al., 2018).

While some fortunate ECRs will have been mentored through this process as doctoral students, "most doctoral programs provide little in the way of pedagogical support for students to meet the demand of greater output" (Badenhorst & Xu, 2016, p. 1), and as such, many ECRs may lack confidence in this area. The production of an academic journal article involves the creation of a text type that ECRs consume in high volumes, particularly in the foundational literature review phases of their own research. However, high-volume consumption of a text does not it itself confer high proficiency in the *writing* of a text. In addition, many ECRs will never have negotiated any form of formal publication process. As ECRs, we can offer current and pertinent insights into the challenges and rewards experienced by those new to the contemporary academic journal article publication, through the interweaving of autoethnographic reflections on our early career experiences of negotiating the complex issues that may emerge on this journey.

Methodology

After numerous comparative discussions, we decided to write a paper on our early career experiences of negotiating the academic writing journey, with a specific focus on the peer-reviewed academic journal article. Our article involves an interaction of autoethnographic perspectives, which involved deliberate reflections on a key concern both "self-consciously" and "deliberately, in order to understand or represent some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self" (Butz & Besio, 2009, p. 1660). We identify as individuals relatively newly indoctrinated into the norms of academic culture, the social context in which we examine ourselves, and with which our self-narratives are concerned (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Across autoethnographic styles, "authors scrutinize, publicize, and reflexively rework their own self-understandings as a way to shape understandings of and in the wider world" (Butz & Besio, 2009, p. 1660). While *collaborative* autoethnographic work may seem like a misnomer, it is becoming an increasingly accepted approach (e.g. Booth, Merga & Mat Roni, 2016). In our case, in addition to being able to note evolution in our own understandings as we accrued further experience in the journal article creation journey, we also sought to position our contributions so that rather than reproducing each other's experiences, we looked to see how our own experiences could illuminate additional facets for consideration. This was easily accommodated as we observed both commonality and difference in our journeys. As such, the process of constructing autoethnography, which is often highly autonomous, became both a collaborative and reflexive endeavor.

As subjects, we are Australian-born female researchers (<5 years post PhD conferral) in ongoing academic roles. Due to our status of each of us being less than 5 years post-PhD conferral, we are considered ECRs by Australian standards (Australian Research Council, 2018). It is this time period rather than volume of publications which determines early career status in Australia. Margaret and Julia both work at Western Australian universities as Senior Lecturers, though Julia also holds an honorary fellowship at a university in the state of Victoria. Shannon is an Assistant Professor at a Japanese university. We have amassed 65 published peer-reviewed journal articles between us, with a number of other papers in press or under review. None of these journals were paid to publish our work. The majority of these articles are in the humanities discipline of education, though some focus on cross-disciplinary concerns relating to education in library and information science, health promotion and health workforce. Margaret published two papers (2010 & 2011) before undertaking her PhD while working as a Senior Education Specialist in a science-related area outside her field. Shannon published one paper before her PhD, and Julia none. All three ECRs published during their PhD journey. At the time of submission, Margaret had 42 published papers, Shannon had 10, and Julia had 13.

We sought to capture our recent and current experiences before we are so fulsomely indoctrinated into the academic journal article publication culture and processes that we cannot clearly recall the tensions, contradictions and benefits encountered on the journey. As relatively recent initiates, our aim is to contribute to the improvement in the quality of the scholarly publishing experience for ECRs and publishers by highlighting these issues and interests. At the intersection between naiveté and experience, we use our quotes and insert our own voices and experiences to make visible tacit knowledge that may not be readily accessible to early-career newcomers as much of this knowledge may be infrequently written down or spoken of. After the aforementioned initial informal discussions, the article developed out of both email exchanges. We identified common frustrations, benefits and concerns, refining the scope of what the article could realistic accommodate, and which points would be most pertinent for our audience. These became the themes around which our work was focussed. We contributed direct quotes that enabled us to illustrate these aspects with a strong sense of authorial presence, a key characteristic of an autoethnographic approach. We focus on target and follow-up; revisions; and limitations and possibilities in peer-review and editorial support. As the three areas we identify herein are closely interrelated, there is considerable blending in our responses, and intersections and overlaps are readily perceived. This is responsive to the reality of the process of engaging with the peer-review journal article publication journey. The experiential aspect which we highlight do not sit as discreet components, but rather can be better conceptualised as mutually informing rather than separate or cyclical. The separation that we impose is thus somewhat artificial. Likewise, in our informing discussions we constantly and naturally discussed aspects of the whole without necessarily adhering to the delineation we use here.

This article is constrained by a number of limitations. There are many other issues and areas that we could have covered in greater detail, such as: implications for writing skills, greater examination of the role of mentors in our journey, the challenges related to the publication of research using less-established methods (e.g. mixed-methods research), comparative experiences in traditional and open-access publication pathways, amongst others. We felt that each vignette could be expanded into a fuller examination of how the event contributed to our learning and our emerging sense of ourselves as ECRs, and that many of them reflected "critical incidents" in our ECR experiences, our reflection upon which can make a valuable contribution to our ongoing professional development (e.g. Pinner, 2018). However, we needed to limit our exploration to what could be realistically explored in a journal article. The three auto-ethnographic voices lack diversity, coming from females in the discipline of education who were born in Australia, and who speak English as our first language. In addition, as these are reflections on our lived experiences produced by those who are still relative novices, we wonder about the extent to which our understandings of the episodes we detailed herein will shift over time and with increased exposure to the cultural norms of our working space. Nonetheless, we hope that our views can act as a basis for further discussion, including a wide range of voices and perspectives.

Literature and Findings

Target and follow-up

An increasing array of factors can be taken into account at journal selection stage. Recent research suggests that ECRs do typically have a strategy, but in essence this simply involves publishing the highest quantity of journal articles in the best quality journals as possible (Nicholas et al., 2017). ECRs are advised to prioritise quality (Clark & Thompson, 2012), however what constitutes a good journal does not remain static. Impact factors fluctuate over time, and acceptable impact measures also change. While we will continue to strive to publish in the most highly regarded journals in our field, this cannot be the only factor at play.

As an ECR, publishing in the highest impact journals can pose a significant challenge (Guthrie, Parker & Dumay, 2015), however ECRs may feel inclined to solely submit to the highest ranked journals in our field, with Clark and Thompson (2012) contending that "publishing quickly to the neglect of being discerning about where work is published is the death knell to publishing well" (p. 2374). However, ECRs also typically need to establish themselves both as swiftly and credibly as possible. Grants are typically won on the basis of previous research. If this research is still under review or in press, the success of these applications is potentially jeopardized.

Credibility and speed of publication are not the only factors to take into account when selecting a target journal. While the expectations of journals can be somewhat surmised through author guidelines, we felt that there were also implicit indicators to take into account when choosing a target journal.

Margaret: *What kinds of voice do they like? What conversations are they promoting? Are they only publishing research that was conducted in the US? Are they only publishing certain methods? In my experience, building this understanding is just as important for success as adhering to author guidelines. And as I gain more experience, I am able to draw on my knowledge about the quality of the editorial process as well as typical timing from submission to acceptance and publication in order to choose an appropriate journal.*

In education, the length of publication process from submission to publication can be highly variable (Mason, 2018), though we note that far greater lag times are the norm in some other disciplines (e.g. Powell, 2016). While we typically endeavour to hold a three-month follow up after submission to check on the status of a paper as an acceptable standard if no other correspondence is forthcoming from the journal, we know that many ECRs and doctoral students are reticent to do this. Julia's experience below underpins the importance of a follow-up strategy; despite her article falling within the scope at the time of submission, a change shortly after this submission led to rejection.

Julia: *I submitted an article a high ranked journal in my field, as the journal aims and scope stated that they were interested in mixed methods research. I knew that it would take some time to get through review, so didn't think too much about it until 12 months later. I logged into my author dashboard and noticed that the article had been rejected a week after I submitted it, with an editorial comment that it was outside of the scope of the journal. However, I didn't receive any notification of this rejection. I emailed the editor asking for more feedback. A month later when I hadn't heard anything, I went back to the journal's homepage, and found that the aims and scope of the journal had been changed to a wholly-qualitative focus. My article was now out of scope! I really wish they'd told me and I could've resubmitted my article sooner. It is now in review with another journal, and I'm being more careful with my follow up!*

Shannon warns against following up too soon, even if author guidelines indicate that an early follow-up is appropriate.

Shannon: *I submitted to a peer reviewed journal with explicit guidelines stating two days for confirmation of submission, and three months for review. When I didn't receive confirmation after two weeks, I made contact to confirm receipt. After four months, I followed up on the progress of the review. I received a curt response. After that I waited for 12 months out of concern that further enquiries might impact the outcome. My co-author eventually called the editor for update, and we received short responses from two anonymous reviewers within a day, rejecting our paper, with what appeared to be rushed feedback not written to any guidelines.*

During both targeting and following-up, we uncovered a hidden knowledge lying beyond the author guidelines, which needed to be negotiated to ensure successful publication.

Revisions

Revisions can improve the quality of a paper, as well as potentially increasing the likelihood of publication (Bakanic, McPhail & Simon, 1987). As ECRs, we initially did not grasp the extent to which these revisions are negotiable. On occasion, requested changes are to the detriment of the quality of the paper, and at the outset we were unaware that we should contest these changes. Shannon reflects on her growth as a writer, and developing the confidence to challenge suggestions that do not constitute an improvement in her view.

Shannon: *For me, especially at first, I was accepting every revision as gospel, but as time went on and my own knowledge and experience grew I noted that at times requests were way beyond the scope of the paper, or required detail that would impede the flow of the paper and word count limitations. Even though now I've come to a point where at times I won't take on a suggestion, I do find myself going into a lot of detail to provide justification.*

Recurring strong negative feedback around the validity of the book as a worthwhile text prompted Margaret to develop a robust counter-argument. She would often receive comment that her focus on literacy and book reading was outdated and therefore of limited value. Fortunately, this view was typically balanced by a peer-reviewer with a more favourable opinion.

Margaret: *I remember that I got a bit of a shock in my early submissions, as I was often asked to justify my focus on books. While accommodating these revisions was frustrating at first, I learned to fight for my research perspective early, drawing on recent large-scale international research to support my claim that books are still worth consideration. Going through this revision process made me more effective at defending my research.*

Both Julia and Margaret discussed challenges around reporting method and the revisions they were requested to undertake.

Julia: *I often find myself justifying methods when it comes to revision. I did this more when I was starting to publish, and I think I'm getting better at how I write this section of a paper, as I've noticed I'm getting fewer reviewer comments about it. It is really tricky to deal with competing reviewers, especially if there is potential that the revised manuscript is going to be returned to the same reviewers.*

Margaret: *The revisions I find the hardest to accommodate are typically those on mixed-methods papers, where I keep getting reviews from people who are exclusively into quantitative or qualitative method. The quantitative people typically ask me to remove, deemphasize or quantise the qualitative data. The qualitative people sometimes don't understand what the quantitative data are saying, and again they ask me to remove or deemphasize the quantitative component.*

In very rare cases, both Julia and Margaret have withdrawn papers where they felt the peer-review process was failing, in that the revisions indicated were representative of tangential interests of the reviewers, where reviewers poorly articulated expected revisions and editors failed to provide additional clarity.

Margaret: *We kept receiving new revisions as new thoughts kept coming to the reviewers through the rounds of revisions. By that time, I had published more than 35 papers, so I knew that what I was experiencing was not normal. The reviewers started to actively* *contradict each other and the editor did not weigh in. For example, Reviewer 2 stated: "The title for me is ambiguous. For example, I can see the authors have responded to a previous reviewer's comments about the age of participants, but I am not sure adding 'in primary school' works unless the authors are talking about children reading in primary school". There were other issues too, including name-calling. After withdrawing the paper, it was quickly accepted elsewhere and with almost no changes. We knew it was a good paper, so we persisted, but if this had happened earlier in my career, I probably would have buried it.*

Hischauer (2010) contends that "when a resubmitted manuscript is accurately revised, it is out of order to raise new objections, even when they may seem relevant". Margaret's experience of facing rounds of new revisions where the reviewers argued with each other was demoralising and frustrating. She saw withdrawing the manuscript as the last possible solution, but she believed that it was necessary at that juncture.

Both Shannon and Margaret had experiences that they perceived as parochialism when submitted to or reviewing for US journals.

Shannon: *I have had papers rejected from so-called 'international' journals because they did not have enough data from the US.*

Margaret: *In one instance as a reviewer, I was privy to all of the reviews submitted for a paper, and I noticed that one of the other reviewers had pointed out the lack of relevance of the research based on the fact that it took place outside the US. I wonder how seriously editors take these kinds of reservations. I recommended acceptance in this instance, as I strongly believed that the paper had cross-contextual relevance, but the other two reviewers suggested rejection, so it didn't get over the line.*

Margaret was concerned about this reviewing experience in the context of the broader research which suggests that outside perspectives such as English as an Additional Language voices may be comparatively marginalised in academic publication (Diem & Wolter, 2013).

Through the process of peer review "manuscript shortcomings should be identified, critically flawed research rejected, and papers with publication potential considered for further revision based upon reviewers' advice (Guthrie, Parker & Dumay, 2015, p. 6). Addressing the shortcomings of our work is a valuable opportunity to both learn from the peer review process and improve the quality of our submission. However, in relation to addition of material to our work, Margaret has at times been asked to incorporate the works of colleagues or friends of editors, or recent texts produced by the publisher of the journal. These requests weren't always tinged with cronyism, and she feels that they fall into one of three categories: insertions that constitute an improvement in the quality of the paper, those that seem to be requested solely make the editor/reviewer/publisher happy in terms of exposure, and the type that does both.

Margaret: *Sometimes it made the paper better, adding currency or context. However, sometimes I find myself shoe-horning in material that is not relevant at all. The most absurd example was where I cited a work because I had to, only to point out (in the paper!) that it* *did not explore the areas relevant to my research. The editor was happy but to be honest, it felt a bit cheap.*

While Margaret feels she is typically a strong supporter of the peer review process, these occasional experiences make her reflect on the construct of academic writing as intellectual prostitution as explored by Frey (2003).

Julia's experiences in adding material were more concerned with making her work seem sufficiently international.

Julia: *I'm still grappling with the idea of adding more material. A common reviewer comment is 'make this more international', which requires the addition of extra material. In the past I have cited a lot of international authors for an idea that I've written in a general way. When I get this reviewer comment, I then go back and explicitly name countries in my sentence while keeping the in-text references the same. This generally meets their needs. I find it a bit frustrating though, as I don't like the paper to read like I've plucked out a few random countries and tossed them into the mix of my discussion. Also, it adds extra words, and words are precious due to the tight word counts of many journals.*

Learning how to revise and accommodate challenging and sometimes controversial requirements in this space has easily been one of the most significant challenges that we have faced as ECRs, and we view this skill set as developing, rather than accomplished. Editors and peer-reviewers can support the development of this skill set in ECRs by requesting changes that are both clearly articulated and reasonable, in that they can be readily accommodated within word count limits, article scope and ethical considerations.

Limitations and possibilities in peer-review and editorial support

Editors play a crucial role in the peer-review process. As research suggests that there may be low agreement between peer reviews (e.g. Bornmann, Mutz & Daniel, 2010), the position of editor should not be a passive role, as they will need to play a role in adjudication at some stage in the review process. Kamler and Thompson (2014) characterize "good editors" as those who are "understand that they need to guide authors about how to negotiate harsh and conflicting reviewer demands" and are willing to "take an active role in synthesizing and giving direction – which advice to attend to fully, which to background, perhaps which to ignore" (p. 156). Good editors endeavour to ensure "that reviewers' edits and comments are not biased but rather provide the author with a detailed report of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper so that the author may make appropriate revisions" (Resnik & Elmore, 2016, p. 177).

While the role of the editor in negotiating referee disagreements and facilitating the paper's progress through peer review has long been a point of contention (e.g. Colman, 1979), one may still encounter widely varying experiences of editorial role in the contemporary academic publishing context. Newton (2010) contends that "reviewers can still be grossly incompetent and biased", and that this "might not matter if editors countered such tendencies", though unfortunately "some editors showed signs of working in ways which are unlikely to do so", preferring "a mechanical role which gives decision making to reviewers" (p. 140). Where reviewers cannot agree and the editor fails to adjudicate, this can be highly problematic. As per below, editorial intervention and clarity were greatly appreciated.

Margaret: *I really appreciate the editors who closely read the reviews and give some direction on which changes they expect you to accommodate, and which are unrealistic or unwarranted. This is particularly important when the reviewers contradict each other (which happens with surprising frequency) or if the requested changes can't be realistically accommodated within rigid word count constraints.*

Shannon described an act of remarkable editorial and reviewer generosity.

Shannon: *I had a paper that was not by any means ready but the editor and reviewers obviously saw potential, and instead of rejecting they requested major revisions. This kept the door open for me while I completely rewrote the paper with the backing of really in-depth advice and guidance from the two reviewers, and the editor themselves. Most of my experiences with editors have been positive, in that they are professional and courteous, even when passing on bad news, but the guidance that I received in this particular case was much appreciated.*

This experience built Shannon's confidence and helped her to improve her paper substantially. While we recognise that this level of editorial support is not broadly feasible in overloaded peer-review and editorial mechanisms, for ECRs this revise and resubmit opportunity accompanied with detailed feedback fostered ECR skills and efficacy. Journals in our discipline typically use a double-blind approach to peer-review, which is felt by early career researchers to be relatively fair and effective (Rodgriguez-Bravo et al., 2017). Despite the significant resourcing pressures on the peer-review model, there are still reviewers "who serve an invisible college, donating their anonymous efforts to the advancement of knowledge", and "there are still authors immensely grateful that someone is taking their work seriously and wishes to help them develop it" (MacDonald, 2015, p. 274). Peer-reviewers have made a substantial contribution to our learning as we have developed our writing and research skills.

Shannon: *I always thank the anonymous reviewers in my papers but I feel at times I want them to have more explicit acknowledgement. I really want to know who the reviewers are after the fact to thank them, and I have heard that you can make this request, but haven't had the courage to do so, and wonder what the reaction might be from the reviewer themselves.*

Margaret: *Particularly in the early days, I feel like I probably submitted some papers with some half-baked ideas interspersed within them, and that the peer-reviewers played a hands-on role in forcing me to finish cooking them. I have learned so much through this kind of generosity. This is where I wish that the reviewing wasn't blind—I'd like to thank these people.*

As ECRs we have had a range of reviewing experiences. There is a small but growing body of research that investigates the peer reviewing process, often with a view to highlighting best-practice (Falkenberg & Soranno, 2018, however formal training in how to perform peer reviews is typically limited in the doctoral experience (Lovejoy, Revenson & France, 2011, p. 1-2). Likewise, academics typically attribute their understanding of how to review "by reading reviews of their own submissions to peer reviewed journals", or "just by doing them" (Paltridge, 2013, p. 10).

Shannon: *I have only had an opportunity to review a handful of papers, but I accepted every one even when I was snowed under with other work. I guess I do feel that it is my obligation to give back, and also I hate the long waiting periods that are often due to a lack of available reviewers. This is one area where there was no training or experience during my PhD, and so I get a lot of assurance when all of the reviews come back and I get to see them all, and I am often not too far off other reviewers in terms of my feedback or final decision. My biggest guide has been through my own experiences publishing, about writing the types of reviews that I would want to receive.*

Julia: *When I read a paper, I think about my feedback and how I would feel if I was the author receiving it. Having this empathy means I take time to make sure that any criticism is constructive, and I also try to distinguish feedback about concept/argument from feedback about structure. Sometimes there are great ideas but the communication makes it unclear, and other times a well-written paper doesn't tell you much at all!*

Margaret: *I'm still learning to be a good reviewer. I try to be really clear, and if I feel that a paper is sound, I'll invest a lot of time to get it over the line. I try not to cross over into co-authorship but I get pretty close to the line. That's something that I need to watch. I think becoming a reviewer yourself helps you to understand that almost all reviewing is an act of generosity. Then you don't take reviews personally, rather, you see them as an opportunity for improvement.*

As such, our reviewing experiences are learning opportunities to which we apply ourselves with some degree of anxiety, fully aware of the importance of upholding the high quality of peer-reviewed publications, while at the same time, understanding the potentially devastating effect that our comments can have on the work of vulnerable academics. Reciprocating in the peer-review process as reviewers has been a highly beneficial learning experience, and it has shaped our perspectives on and understanding of the peer-review process. We also note that where a supportive culture is generated by the editor of a journal, this has had a powerful positive impact on our learning as ECRs.

Discussion and Conclusion

Through our experiences of the peer-review journal article publication process we have learned primarily through participation. We hope to contribute to the improvement in the quality of the scholarly publishing experience for ECRs and publishers by highlighting some of the issues that affected us while we are still relative novices in the ECR journey, and beset with the unique vulnerabilities and deficiencies inherent in this position. As three ECRs who identify strongly as educators, we also hope that our paper serves an educative capacity, providing ECRs with realistic expectations of norms, possibilities and challenges involved in writing journal articles.

Though we moved into the journal writing space expecting clear, neat and immutable processes and experiences, we have learned more about the reality of the space. We conclude that ECRs need to be able to access knowledge and strategies that do not necessarily need to be acquired through the challenges of trial and error. Strategies such as choosing a target journal may not always be explicitly taught at university level, either in courses, or in supervisor/student dyads, but considering the complexity and fluctuating expectations in this that we outlined, it certainly warrants inclusion in doctoral student training. We have learned about the diverse experiences of follow-up and wait times has underscored the importance of not assuming that a submitted journal article will embark on the journey to reviewers without conservative follow-up strategies. Considering the volume of effort that is expended on each journal article, and the aforementioned high importance of publication for ECRs in particular, both complacency and excessive intervention are not indicated through our experiences. ECRs may need to access implicit knowledge as well as explicit author guidelines in order to identify appropriate journals and to communicate effectively with them, and while they are acquiring this skill set, they will benefit from guidelines that are clear, and scope and aims that do not change without notice.

We also recognise the transferability potential for these skills and others as we learn to interact with our colleagues in positive and productive ways. We have dealt with what we perceived to be occasional instances of parochialism and cronyism in relation to revisions. These experiences have forced us to develop stronger communication skills, more realistic expectations, and both diplomatic and strategic dispositions. However, we all concede that we still have much to learn about how to manage scenarios that challenge our understanding of research ethics. Both Julia and Margaret have already been on editorial boards and these experiences can strengthen our ability to be good editors and reviewers, as we discussed in the context of reciprocation. The role that the peer-review journal writing process has played in supporting us to improve and become more effective researchers and communicators has been profound for all three of us. What we have learned through this process as gone on to shape all elements of the design of our subsequent research, in addition to what it has contributed to our aforementioned communicative capacities. Learning how to perform challenging and sometimes controversial revisions is a complex skill set to acquire, but we found that both supportive peer-review cultures established by editors and opportunities to engage in peer review have may play a key role in enhancing our understanding of the peer review process.

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