

**SRHE**

*Society for Research  
into Higher Education*

**Academic journal editors' professionalism:  
perceptions of power, proficiency and personal agendas**

Final report

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## AUTHOR DETAILS

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Also employed at the University of Leeds, **Matthew Homer** is a chartered statistician with a wide range of methodological and substantive research interests. His recent work includes using national educational data to investigate influences on participation and attainment in school science following substantial curricula reform, and the impact of new types of science courses on such influences. He is currently working on a nationally representative survey of STEM teachers in FE, and maths teachers in sixth form colleges, with the aim of assessing how many more such teachers might be needed given the additional workforce demands that recent government policies are likely to bring. Another dimension to his research interests and expertise incorporates assessment and psychometrics in medical education. This latter work is focussed on standards-setting and quality assurance in high stakes assessment, using a range of methodological approaches, including Rasch modelling and re-sampling methods.

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## SUMMARY

Set against the backdrop of the performativity culture that defines the 21<sup>st</sup> century academy in the UK, an institution whose cornerstone is the dissemination of knowledge, the study reported below was intended to examine and analyse a key agential dimension of the academic knowledge economy: academic journal editors' professionalism.

Applying a conceptualisation of professionalism that interprets it as encompassing what practitioners do (in the context of their work), how they do it, why they do it, and what attitudes they hold, the research was focused particularly on the extent to which journal editors are perceived as wielding power within their academic communities, and on the nature and extent of any such power, and its consequences on those most likely to be affected by it: academics as authors.

Over the course of a year the perspectives of two constituencies were sought: academic journal editors and authors representing 7 broad disciplinary groups. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire that yielded over 800 responses from authors, and through 35 follow-up interviews (20 with editors; 15 with authors).

The findings revealed widespread recognition that journal editors exercise power within their academic communities, but for the most part this was considered neither malignant nor obstructive, and the broad consensus was that editors are generally effective, conscientious, fair and proficient, and the system within which they operate fit for purpose. Criticisms and complaints were nevertheless articulated: editors were perceived as sometimes abrogating their editorial responses, being insensitive to authors' needs and preferences, and occasionally behaving unethically. For their part, editors downplayed their potency and some provided examples of their impotence in some circumstances.

The selected findings presented in this report are indicative rather than comprehensive, representing only a fraction of those that the study has yielded. Analysis of the abundant data remains on-going. On the basis of this partial and incomplete analysis, the tentative conclusions reached are that it is perhaps more helpful to think of journal editors as academic leaders rather than as power-wielders, and that – to bring editors' enacted professionalism more in line (than in currently appears to be) with the editorial professionalism that authors expect of or want - serious consideration should be given to the viability and feasibility of expanding the practice of professional, salaried, editorship.

## BACKGROUND

The study reported below is set against the backdrop of the publications-focused performativity regime and culture that pervade the 21<sup>st</sup> century academy and shape academic life. In the UK the research excellence framework (REF) is currently the principal influence on the neoliberal managerialist and accountability context within which most academics carry out their work. Since publications constitute what is arguably the REF's most significant component, academic journals represent a highly significant feature of the academic landscape, and by extension academic journal editors may be considered to wield immense (and largely unrivalled) power. Our study's purpose was to uncover something of the nature and extent of this putative power base.

With most universities having required published work to be rated at 3\* level to be entered in the 2015 Research Excellence Framework (REF) – and, anecdotally, there are indicators that the bar set by many institutions may be raised even higher for the next REF - pressure on academics is greater than ever. Indeed, since some REF subject panels pay heed to journal rankings, *where* one is published has now become extremely important – the 'informal journal caste system' to which Bray and Major (2011, p. 479) refer has become a recognised artefact within the prevalent cultures of research-intensive institutions and research-focused communities. In the UK's pre-1992 sector, academic careers may be made or broken on the basis of publication records, yet, as Tourish (2011, p. 375) observes, '[journal rankings systems] are increasingly employed for performative ends. Whatever the formal intent, they are used to re-route academic effort down channels more concerned with *prestige and power* than open-ended academic inquiry. *Careers thrive or perish depending on one's skill at playing this particular game.* ... academic life and publishing [is] a much more emotionally and intellectually fraught undertaking than it needs to be' (emphasis added).

The basis of any power that academic journal editors are perceived to hold is not only and not simply REF-related; as Weiner (2001) points out, academic publishing is also used to inform appointments- and promotions-related decisions. Journal editors are effectively the gatekeepers of what is the increasingly competitive and select world inhabited by prolific academics who have succeeded in playing the publishing 'game' (Peters & Ceci, 1982; Colman, 1982; Crandall, 1982). To apply a medieval (and hence sexist) epithet, they may, to all intents and purposes, be considered the 'kingmakers' of the academic community, for although they typically rely on the advice of reviewers (and to varying degrees on their editorial boards), it is usually editors who decide whether to act on that advice; it is they who ultimately decide whom to publish and whom to reject. Is it then going too far to argue that editors, collectively (or even individually, in some cases) - within a discipline/subject, or more widely within academia – indirectly determine the fate of individuals' careers – or that, through their visions for their own journals and through their editorial practice, they have the capacity to set the epistemic, methodological, paradigmatic and substantive parameters of their fields, to shape the dominant discourses, and to set research agendas? Our research was focused on addressing this question.

We chose to examine and consider these issues through the lens of what we refer to as journal editors' *professionalism*. It is important to clarify the interpretation of professionalism that we applied to the study, and apply throughout this report, for it deviates quite considerably from 'everyday' non-academic interpretations of professionalism.

### PROFESSIONALISM: CONCEPT AND FRAMEWORK

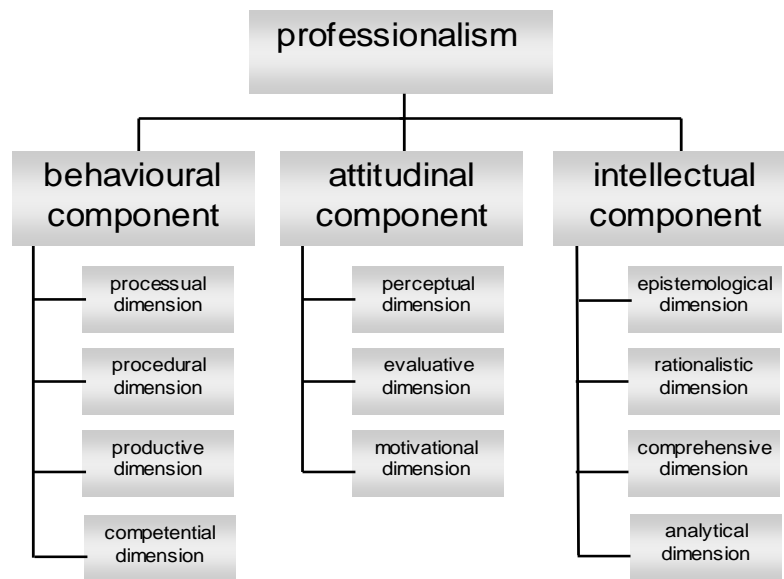
In the common vernacular, professionalism is typically and traditionally understood as the extent to which individuals practise their profession ethically and commendably, in the best interests of their 'clients' (or those whom they 'serve'). Formulated by one of us (Evans), the interpretation of professionalism applied to our study is wider than this and correlates with interpretations that reflect developments in the sociology of professions over the last few years, which represent departures from and modifications to traditional classic conceptualisations of professionalism and criteria for professional status (e.g. Evetts 2003; Bottero, 2005, Noordegraaf, 2007, 2013). Explaining it as encompassing: what practitioners do (in the context of their work), how they do it, why they do it, and what attitudes they hold, Evans defines professionalism as:

practice that is consistent with commonly held consensual delineations of a specific occupational group and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the group's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within, the occupational group, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice (Evans, 2013, p. 484).

This defines professionalism not as exemplary, but as 'qualitatively neutral', professional practice –'as something that *is*, rather than as something that *ought* to be' (Evans, 2013, p. 484), rendering redundant the term 'unprofessional'.

Evans's conceptualisation, represented in Figure 1, essentially deconstructs professionalism into key constituent parts, labelled concisely and generically.

Figure 1: The componential structure of professionalism, as formulated by Evans (2011)



Evans identifies three main constituent components of professionalism: behavioural, attitudinal, and intellectual. Each incorporates further elements or dimensions, of which eleven are currently identified, as indicated in Figure 1; (their vertically-sequenced arrangement is necessitated by space restrictions and does not imply any hierarchical positioning). The *behavioural* component of professionalism relates to what practitioners physically do at work. Its sub-components are: the *processual*, *procedural*, *productive*, and *competential* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: processes that people apply to their work; procedures that they apply to their work; output, productivity and achievement (how much people 'do' and what they achieve); and their skills and competences.

The *attitudinal* component of professionalism relates to attitudes held. Its sub-components are: the *perceptual*, *evaluative*, and *motivational* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: perceptions, beliefs and views held, (including those relating to oneself, hence, *self*-perception and identity); people's values (not only 'grand' values, such as equity and justice, but also the more mundane things that people value in or about their work – the minutiae that matter to them); and people's motivation, job satisfaction and morale.

The *intellectual* component of professionalism relates to practitioners' knowledge and understanding and their knowledge structures. Its sub-components are: the *epistemological*, *rationalistic*, *comprehensive*, and *analytical* dimensions of professionalism, which relate respectively to: the bases of people's knowledge; the nature and degree of reasoning that they apply to their practice; what they know and understand; and the nature and degree of their analyticism (see Evans, 2011 for a fuller explanation of these dimensions).

Evans also identifies four perspectives of professionalism that we applied to our data collection and analysis:

- professionalism that is *demand*ed or *request*ed (such as that reflecting specific professional service level demands or requests made of an occupational group or workforce),
- professionalism that is *prescribed* (such as that reflecting professional service levels recommended by analysts),
- *deduced* or *assumed* professionalism - distinct from prescribed professionalism since it does not involve prescription, this represents reasoned deduction and/or assumption or speculation about the nature of professionalism,
- professionalism that is *enacted* - professional practice as observed, perceived and interpreted (by any observer – from outside or within the relevant professional group, and including those doing the ‘enacting’).

As Evans (2011) points out, only the fourth of these represents ‘reality’ (albeit a phenomenologically defined reality); the other three perspectives represent insubstantiality ranging from articulated ideology to wishful thinking. These are therefore referred to as perspectives of professionalism’s ‘reified state’, since they relate to how ‘real’ it is.

## PROFESSIONALISM APPLIED TO ACADEMIC JOURNAL EDITORS

Our research focused on two broad perspectives on, and perceptions of, academic journal editors’ *enacted* professionalism: those held by editors themselves, and those held by authors.

We were principally concerned to uncover to what extent and in what ways - if at all – the exercise of power is considered to feature within academic journal editors’ enacted professionalism (i.e. their editorial practice as observed, perceived and interpreted). Power is one of the most elusive notions in the social sciences (Navarro, 2006). Carter’s (1992) and Whitmeyer’s (1997) interpretations - power is ‘the ability to affect the probability that others will perform some behaviour’ (Whitmeyer, 1997) – correspond with the interpretation that we apply to our examination and analyses of editorial power. Reflecting the ripple effect of powerful agency, editors potentially affect directly the probability that an author will have her article published, and they may be considered to affect indirectly the probability that an academic will disseminate his work in the manner in which he wishes to disseminate it, or even that an academic will be promoted, or entered into the REF. We share Foucault’s (1991) recognition that power is not necessarily a negative form of agency. Accordingly, our interest in examining the extent and nature of journal editors’ perceived power is not values-laden; we tried to approach it with neutrality and to analyse non-judgementally.

Our decision to seek the perspectives of two broad constituencies reflects our recognition that, as Whitmeyer (1997) observes, power is a relational thing, so in order to understand it it is necessary to examine the perspectives not only of those considered to exercise power, but also those on the receiving end of, and affected by, it. Our research design therefore incorporated consideration of how we could best, with the resources available to us, capture something of this relationality.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The main, overarching, aim of the study was to examine the extent to which and the ways in which academic journal editors exercise power within their academic communities through their enactment of their editorial roles and responsibilities – which equates to their enacted professionalism, as explained above. The project examined the editor role and the nature of editorial practice, and the impact of this on academia – particularly on those who try to be or succeed in being published (aspiring and actual authors): exploring the ripple effect of editorial power and influence.

### OBJECTIVES

Within this main aim, the objectives were:

1. to examine the nature of journal editors' professionalism;
  2. to identify within that professionalism the potential for exercising power (directly or indirectly);
  3. to identify and examine specific examples of perceptions of actual (as opposed to potential) editorial power – revealing its nature;
- and,
4. to examine the impact on individuals of editorial power.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to meet these objectives, the research was directed towards addressing the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of editorial practice? – *what does it 'look like'; what processes & procedures does it involve?*
2. What are the bases of editors' decisions? – *who and what influences them and why, and to what extent?*
3. What motivates people to become and remain journal editors and what influences (positively and negatively) their motivation, morale and satisfaction? – *what are the positive and negative aspects of the role?*
4. What are the key current and future issues and challenges associated with editorial work, and how are these (or might these be) addressed and/or impact upon the editorial role?
5. What perceptions of the journal editor role, responsibilities and professionalism - and of how these translate into power - are held by: a) editors themselves, and b) aspiring or actual/experienced authors?
6. What defines a proficient journal editor? – *what are the criteria for proficiency and who determines them?*

### SAMPLE COMPOSITION AND SELECTION

Several categories of stakeholders (e.g. learned societies, editorial boards, and publishers) are well placed for providing data with the potential to address the research questions, but with limited resources at our disposal, we opted for trying to achieve analytical depth (rather than wider, but potentially more superficial, coverage) by focusing on only two constituencies: academic journal editors and aspiring/actual authors. Sample sizes were determined on the basis of what was considered achievable within the study's one-year duration and with the resources available to us.

#### *Editors*

A sample of 20 UK-based editors was selected with the aim of its ideally representing at least six variables:

- gender of the editor;
- experience as an editor (including both length and width of experience [i.e. editorship of multiple journals]);
- mission group of editor's employing university (to include pre-1992 and post-1992 universities, which were anticipated to differ from each other in relation to research focus and hence prioritisation of academic publishing);
- professional status of the editor (to include editors whose main job is that of university academic, and those whose full time job is that of journal or section editor);



- disciplinary focus of the journal (to include arts and humanities-, STEM-, social science-focused and interdisciplinary journals);
- journal status and origin (to include representation of a range of differently ranked journals, from the well-established ones and those with the highest impact factors, to recently established ones, and to include both online-only journals and those available in print and online format, as well as those published under the aegis of learned societies and those with no such affiliation).

Sample selection was unsystematic. It incorporated a combination of two approaches directed towards securing a sample as outlined above:

- trawling publishers' journals websites to ascertain the names of UK-based journal editors, and then contacting a range of such editors to invite their participation in the study as interviewees;
- trawling the websites of UK universities for the names of academics who served as academic journal editors (this involved a keyword search: 'editor' was entered into the university search box), and then inviting their participation as interviewees.

The composition of the editor sample is indicated in Table 1, below. The low representation of the arts and humanities fields correlates with the variable status and prevalence of academic journal publishing amongst this broad disciplinary community; depending on the subject or field, book publishing – particularly monographs – is often the main and preferred mode (and in some cases, considered the mode with the highest status) of research dissemination. Representation of the arts and humanities in academic journal publishing is therefore lower than that of other disciplines.

#### *Authors*

The aim was to secure the participation as questionnaire respondents (see section below on data collection) of as many actual/aspiring authors as was achievable with the resources available and within the life of the project.

Sample selection was unsystematic. Since the overwhelming majority of authors are employed by or affiliated with a university, specific UK universities were first selected on the basis of their representing one or both of: geographical location (to ensure representation of all four UK national contexts), or institution type (e.g. pre- or post-1992 university, or ancient university, or specialist institution). Once the university's website was accessed, one or more of its departments were selected in a non-systematic manner (though as it became evident that specific disciplines or subjects were under-represented in the responses, departments were then often selected on the basis of potential for redressing the imbalance). Other practical factors were influential on the selection of specific departments or centres, such as the ease with which individuals' email addresses could be accessed and copied (this proved particularly challenging in the cases of many post-92 universities, whose websites were often noticeably less sophisticated and less comprehensive in content coverage than those of pre-92 universities, making them more difficult to navigate).

Once a department had been selected, all or most of its academics identified (on the basis of their listed publications/conference presentations and job titles) as actual or aspiring academic journal authors were emailed a request to participate as a questionnaire respondent; requests were addressed to each individual by name, to encourage participation. The process of sending participation invitations, once a staff list was selected, thus involved a sequence of three or four copying, cutting and pasting actions per message sent. The wording of the request (see Appendix A) remained almost unchanged throughout the process and scarcely varied in relation to whom it was sent to. The email was initially headed: *SRHE-funded study of academic journal editors' professionalism*. This was later revised – with the aim of increasing its appeal, and hence participation – to: *SRHE-funded study of experiences of getting published and journal editors' professionalism*.

The proposal to the SRHE for this project estimated that participation invitations would be distributed by email to 1,500-2,000 UK-based academics. In the event, almost 3,000 were sent by us, yielding 830 responses, achieving a response rate of around 28%.

<i>editor</i>	<i>gender</i>	<i>university type</i>	<i>employment status &amp; role</i>	<i>category of journal disciplinary focus</i>
1	M	pre-92	academic	arts & humanities
2	M	n/a	full time section editor	STEMM
3	M	pre-92	academic	STEMM
4	F	pre-92	academic	arts & humanities
5	M	pre-92	academic	STEMM
6	M	pre-92	academic	STEMM
7	M	pre-92	academic	interdisciplinary (with a strong social science focus)
8	M	pre-92	academic	social sciences
9	M	pre-92	academic	interdisciplinary/social sciences
10	F	pre-92	academic	social sciences
11	M	n/a	full time editor-in-chief	STEMM
12	M	post-92	academic	interdisciplinary/social sciences
13	M	post-92	academic	interdisciplinary/social sciences
14	F	pre-92	academic	interdisciplinary
15	M	pre-92	academic	arts & humanities
16	F	post-92	academic	social sciences
17	F	post-92	academic	interdisciplinary
18	M	pre-92	academic	STEMM
19	M	pre-92	academic	social sciences
20	F	post-92	academic	social sciences

**Table 1:** Sample composition: editors

The questionnaire respondent sample distribution in relation to academic grade or status is shown in Table 2, below.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Lecturer/assistant professor	197	23.7	23.8
Senior lecturer/associate professor	168	20.2	20.3
Principal lecturer	3	.4	.4
Reader/associate professor	69	8.3	8.4
Professor	215	25.9	26.0
Research assistant	10	1.2	1.2
Research fellow/associate	111	13.4	13.4
Senior research fellow/associate	38	4.6	4.6
Principal research fellow/associate	6	.7	.7
Professorial research fellow/associate	9	1.1	1.1
Total	826	99.5	100.0
Missing System	4	.5	
Total	830	100.0	

**Table 2:** questionnaire sample distribution on the basis of academic grade/status: authors

The questionnaire respondent sample distribution in relation to disciplinary affiliation is shown in Table 3, below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Arts & humanities	120	14.5	14.6
	Social sciences & economics	210	25.3	25.5
	Engineering, physical sciences & mathematics	156	18.8	18.9
	Biotechnology & biological sciences	88	10.6	10.7
	Medical research	162	19.5	19.7
	Natural environment	74	8.9	9.0
	Sciences & technology facilities	14	1.7	1.7
	Total	824	99.3	100.0
Missing	System	6	.7	
Total		830	100.0	

**Table 3:** questionnaire sample distribution on the basis of disciplinary affiliation: authors

The questionnaire respondent sample distribution in relation to career stage is shown in Table 4, below, indicating a broadly even spread across the three categories available for selection: early career, mid-career and senior (career stage was subjectively-determined by respondents; no objective indicators were provided).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Early career academic/researcher	265	31.9	32.0
	Mid-career academic/researcher	262	31.6	31.6
	Senior academic/researcher	302	36.4	36.4
	Total	829	99.9	100.0
Missing	System	1	.1	
Total		830	100.0	

**Table 4:** questionnaire sample distribution on the basis of career stage: authors

The questionnaire respondent sample distribution in relation to gender is shown in Table 5, below, indicating an under-representation of females.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	505	60.8	61.4
	Female	317	38.2	38.6
	Total	822	99.0	100.0
Missing	System	8	1.0	
Total		830	100.0	

**Table 5:** questionnaire sample distribution on the basis of gender: authors

From this author sample, a sub-sample of 15 was selected for participation as interviewees (see section below on data collection), from the 168 questionnaire respondents who indicated their willingness to be interviewed.

The interviewee sub-sample was selected with a view to providing, ideally, representation of a range of the following variables:

- gender;
- seniority level and job role (to include a range of grades of academic and research staff, from professor to early career academic/researcher);
- university type (to include both pre- and post-1992 universities);
- native language (to include representation of authors whose native language is not English);
- subject/discipline (to include representation of all three disciplinary categories used in this study);
- publications profile (to include those with very few or no listed publications, as well as prolific authors);
- experiences of and attitudes towards getting published, as indicated by questionnaire responses (to include positive and negative reported experiences, and a range of attitudes).

The composition of the sub-sample of author interviewees is indicated in Table 6, below.

<i>author interviewee</i>	<i>gender</i>	<i>discipline</i>	<i>native language/s</i>	<i>university type</i>	<i>job title</i>
1	M	STEMM	Swedish	pre-92	reader
2	F	arts & humanities	English	pre-92	professor
3	M	social sciences	English	pre-92	lecturer
4	M	arts & humanities	English	post-92	lecturer
5	F	STEMM	English	pre-92	associate professor
6	M	STEMM	English	pre-92	senior lecturer
7	M	STEMM/social sciences	English	pre-92	professor
8	M	social sciences	English	pre-92	professor
9	M	STEMM	German & English	pre-92	senior lecturer
10	F	STEMM	Spanish	pre-92	research fellow
11	M	STEMM	English	pre-92	professor
12	M	STEMM	Russian	pre-92	senior lecturer
13	M	STEMM	English	pre-92	professor
14	M	arts & humanities	English	pre-92	senior lecturer
15	F	social sciences	English	post-92	reader

**Table 6:** Sample composition: author interviewees

## DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from the editor sample through semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule (presented in Appendix B) was designed to serve as an *aide memoire* for prompting discussion of issues encompassed within the research questions, but incorporating the flexibility to follow-up unanticipated relevant topics. Interviews were audio recorded (with interviewees' permission) and recordings transcribed to facilitate analysis. All were conducted face-to-face, to encourage a good interviewer-interviewee rapport.

The perspectives of the second constituency – (aspiring or actual) authors – were obtained in two phases: through online questionnaires (phase 1) and through follow-up, face-to-face, interviews (phase 2) with a small sub-sample (selected as explained in the section *Sample composition and selection*, above). Interviews were conducted precisely as were those with the editor sample (as outlined in the paragraph above) – (see Appendix C for a copy of the author interview schedule).

To encourage participation, the author questionnaire was designed to be completed within 5 minutes, and its brevity was highlighted at the beginning of the emailed participation invitation (see Appendix A). It was piloted twice and revised in the light of each pilot sample's feedback, before finally going live in online format (Bristol Online Surveys was used), with a link to it included at two points in the participation invitation. A typescript copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix D.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of quantitative questionnaire data was effected automatically by the online questionnaire system. Qualitative data – both from questionnaire responses (open-ended items) and from interviews – were analysed manually, through an incrementally reductive process from which key themes (relevant to the research objectives and questions) emerged that illuminated people’s experiences of academic journal editorship and/or of being or trying to be published in academic journals, together with their attitudinal responses to these experiences, the bases of these responses, the perceived effects on people’s working lives, and the extent to which and the ways in which these may be considered to reflect power relations.

*It is important to emphasise that the study has yielded an abundance of data, whose quantity has made it impossible to analyse other than superficially and partially in time for it to be incorporated into this report. Data analysis remains on-going and is likely to continue for many months. The findings presented below thus represent a preliminary, impressionistic overview of selected key issues and patterns that emerged. They represent only a fraction of the findings to have emerged.*

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

It is important to keep in mind that this was a study of academic journal editors' professionalism and of the extent to and the ways in which the exercise of power features as part of that professionalism. The selected findings presented below represent, for the most part, one of four of what Evans (2013) calls 'reified state' perspectives: journal editors' 'enacted' professionalism – that is (as we explain above), their professionalism as it is observed and subjectively interpreted by any observer. In the case of our study, the nature of journal editors' enacted professionalism is represented as determined by two constituencies of observers: editors themselves and journal authors. In some cases this involves divergent perspectives; in other cases more consensus is evident across the two broad perspectives.

A second 'reified state' perspective – 'demanded' or 'requested' professionalism - also features in the findings, but less prominently than does 'enacted' professionalism. This is the perspective of authors who make evident their expectations or hopes in relation to the nature of professionalism that they are effectively 'demanding' of or 'requesting' from journal editors. In some cases this perspective correlates with that of editors' enacted professionalism; in other cases, it diverges from it.

The greatest diversity evident across the sample, however, was essentially economically driven. It was represented by the distinction evident between two kinds – indeed, two constituencies - of academic journal editor.

### WORLDS APART? TWO CONSTITUENCIES OF EDITOR

Two distinct categories of academic journal editor were included in our sample:

- those who are employed first and foremost as university academics and whose editorial work is an 'add-on' to their main jobs (we refer to these as 'academics-as-editors');
- 'professional' editors of academic journals, who are employed (usually by publishing companies, or by companies that incorporate publishers) as full time editors, and who do not hold academic posts in universities (we refer to these as 'professional editors').

All except two of our editor interviewees fell into the first category. These academics-as-editors received little – if any – payment for their editorial work. Some reported honoraria (and/or expense allowances) of what was usually £2000-£5000 per annum (though some received no payment at all), and their editorial roles were not recognised by their universities for workload purposes. The second category – represented by two members of our sample – were full time, salaried editors (see Table 1).

Predictably, this role- or employment-related distinction made for quite disparate versions of editors' enacted professionalism.

### THE NATURE OF ACADEMIC JOURNAL EDITORS' ENACTED PROFESSIONALISM: AN OVERVIEW

#### *Processes*

Interviews with the editor sample revealed the principal processes applied to editorial practice to be unsurprising: reading, writing, and – overlapping with these - interpersonal interaction. In the cases of academics-as-editors, the bulk of their editorial-related time was devoted to reading submitted manuscripts and reviewers' reports. In contrast, the professional editors' working week was potentially quite varied. Of the two professional editors included in our sample, one was the editor-in-chief of a high ranking journal. In his interview he reported seldom reading submissions – this, he explained, is delegated to section and sub-editors; his role is predominantly more strategically-focused. It involves much international travel to engage with prominent or promising researchers working in the higher education and commercial sectors, and to observe on-going research, with a view to promoting the journal and persuading principal investigators to publish their findings in it. It involves high level strategic decision making, and it involves determining – in

consultation with his team and with the publishers – the journal’s priorities and future academic direction. He outlined the nature of his working day:

I’m typically...well, I could be in [the office] at 7.30, and I would typically leave at about 6pm...6.30 – I think I may change that, actually, because I can work just as well at home. And most weekends I’ll do some work, so, it’s an intensive job. When I’m in the office...I take a direct responsibility for the editorials...although I have an editor in charge of that, so, if I’m away, there’s nothing that depends on me. ...I attend the news meetings, and other meetings that are looking at what we’re going to put in [the journal] over the next week or two. But every section of [the journal] has editors who’re completely responsible for it. ...So, what else do I do? Well, I’ll certainly be talking to my boss, who’s the managing director of the publishing group...and he’s, in effect, the publisher of the journal. We don’t talk much about the journal, because I’m left to get on with it, but there’s the company as a whole, which is doing lots of development. So a lot of my time goes on company-wide issues, when it comes to internal management. ...Er...there’ll be meetings I’ll go to externally...just visiting people – and a lot of that will be abroad; we are absolutely not biased towards Britain in any particular way. ...So, the sorts of people I visit...sometimes it’ll be because I’ve taken an interest in a discipline where I think we have a longer term interest, and it’s up to me – even if I’m not making decisions on the papers – to be looking into the way it’s going to evolve. So, this morning, we had a meeting all about [names a topical issue], and I have all the editors in the group who handle papers about [names the topical issue] sitting around the table, and we were discussing what’re the really interesting issues out there...what should we be looking at, etc. So, I’d lead that sort of discussion, and follow up on the actions. Er...looking at how we deploy multimedia: audio and video...what’s their role?...I think another important thing to say is, there’s a total independence, very deeply respected in this company, between editorial and publishing, so, although I’ll absolutely be in board meetings to discuss the business, there is absolutely no way anyone ever tries to tell us what to publish or what not to publish; that’s absolutely crucial (male editor-in-chief, STEMM journal).

The second professional editor was a section editor of a high ranking journal. Whilst his job evidently also involves some out-of-office work, such as conference attendance in the UK and overseas, he described his typical working day as predominantly desk-based. He explained that, in addition to assessing submissions and dealing with revisions and pre-submission enquiries (with the support of a team of editorial assistants), a key part of his job is to ‘keep at the forefront of knowledge’ in his specific STEMM field, which he achieves by daily literature searches, scanning what he estimated to be around 50 published research papers per day, and reading in depth the ones that promise to augment his understanding of the field’s current issues, challenges and breakthroughs.

In contrast to the highly interpersonal nature of the *professional* editor-in-chief’s work, with few financial resources at their disposal, *academics-as-editors* reported seldom interacting face-to-face with other parties in relation to editorial work. For the most part, their face-to-face interaction is evidently confined to serendipitous meeting (such as at conferences) or meetings whose costs are able to be met (most typically by learned societies under whose aegis some journals are published). Where it does occur, it variously takes the form of, *inter alia*:

- meetings of editorial boards
- meetings between co-editors
- meetings (sometimes through oral presentations and sometimes through ad hoc occasional one-to-one ‘mentoring’ or advice) between editors and prospective (and often inexperienced) authors.

Writing activities undertaken by academics-as-editors variously take the form of, *inter alia*:

- drafting editorials;
- communicating with authors;
- communicating with reviewers;
- communicating with publishers;
- editorial board meeting administration.

Depending on the nature and status of their journals, a small number of academics-as-editors also reported spending large proportions of their editorial time engaging (usually through email) with authors: responding to their enquiries and, occasionally, complaints, and in some cases working with them to refine and eventually turn successive drafts into publishable articles. This developmental dimension to editorial practice (i.e. where editors develop others) occurred in a minority (< 7) of cases. With the exception of one case – that of an experienced female editor of an established social science journal that received adequate submissions - it tended to be enacted for pragmatic reasons by editors of new or recently established journals that regularly suffered from copy flow problems; three such editors explained that if they had not undertaken considerable and extensive editing of, or worked closely with inexperienced authors on, submissions that would not otherwise be accepted, their journals would have struggled to get off the ground (and in some cases were still struggling to survive). Conversely, editors of high status journals reported engaging in no such developmentally-focused editing on a one-to-one basis with authors, other than advising on the development of proposed submissions.

### *Procedures*

Author questionnaire data and interviews with editors and authors combined to reveal much consistency in the procedural elements of the editorial role, which in most cases principally involve:

- screening and making summary initial evaluations of all submissions;
- using reviewers, who are assumed to be suitably knowledgeable, to advise on decisions relating to submissions acceptance;
- advising authors of the decisions relating to their submission;
- committing accepted articles to publication;
- reporting to interested parties/stakeholders (editorial boards; publishers; learned societies).

Interview data revealed slight procedural variations between disciplines and disciplinary fields; in the social sciences and arts and humanities, for example, the common procedure is for reviewing to be double blind, so submissions and reviewers' reports are anonymised before processing. In some of the STEMM disciplines the procedure is for authors' identities to be known to the reviewers, but not vice versa; in other STEMM fields each party – reviewer and author – is aware of the other's identity. These variations inevitably affect the procedural nature of editors' communications with authors and reviewers.

### *Skills, competences and knowledge*

Interview-generated data revealed journal editors' enacted professionalism to incorporate a wide range of skills and competences, which include:

- reviewer evaluation (for [re-]selection purposes);
- review evaluation (for application to decision making);
- submission evaluation (for decision making);
- skim reading and speed reading;
- interpersonal skills;
- time management.

In relation to most of these skills – particularly review and reviewer evaluation skills - there was a degree of disparity between authors' and editors' perspectives of editors' professionalism. All editors implied that they considered themselves generally competent at evaluating reviews and, for the most part, capable of detecting what they suggested were rare cases of reviewer bias, self-interest, or incompetence – indeed, the professional section editor considered it essential to his skillset and knowledge base to be aware of rivalries and competing projects and ideas: 'being aware of it is *most* important when you're assigning referees, and then looking at the reviews'. Yet many authors nevertheless shared with us their experiences of what they considered editorial negligence, incompetence, or shirking of responsibilities. Such complaints were, proportionally, more prevalent in the questionnaire data than in the data generated from interviews. The following anonymous comments are illustrative of them:

I strongly feel that social science journals are badly edited. Referees of papers are given freedom and authority by some editors, which encourages unprofessionalism. Difference of opinion is often the sole reason for rejection. Editors frequently do not give guidance on how



to interpret referee's reports. I think it is great you are doing this research - journals in my subject (sociology) vary enormously in the professionalism of editors and referees - many are quite simply appalling.

There is a general lack of consistency in the review process that editors appear to ignore. I have personal experience (as have colleagues) of articles being rejected by an editor after critical peer review subsequently being submitted to another comparable journal and being accepted without corrections and glowing peer review. This inconsistency suggests that the allocation, by the editor, of articles to particular reviewers - whom they know hold certain positions - is a weakness in the academic rigour of the review process that needs to be addressed.

Personally, I see more problems with reviewers (who are quite subjective and also often fail to adjust their reviewing dependent on the nature of the journal). This then becomes an editorial problem when editors rely too heavily on the reviews.

### *Productivity and output*

There is evident variation in editors' productivity, or how much they 'do' as editors. Clearly, the two professional editors devoted 100% of their working days to editorial tasks, but for the rest of the editor sample journal editing was an add-on to their main jobs as academics, and the amount of time they expended on editorial work depended on inter-related factors such as: their motivation; their degree of autonomy and perceived responsibility or accountability to others (such as: learned societies, editorial boards, co-editors; publishers; authors); any payment (e.g. honoraria) received for their editorial work; competing demands of their academic roles; the status of their journal; the availability/provision of administrative support; the journal production/publication calendar; copy flow and submission rates; the quality of submissions; and, the co-operation and availability of reviewers.

Some academics-as-editors reported regularly setting aside time each week (typically one or two days – often at weekends) to carry out journal-related work; others evidently adopt a more *ad hoc* approach. Some reported confining themselves to tasks related to the processing of submissions; others reported undertaking additional tasks, such as conference attendance - funded by publishers – or advice sessions for early career aspiring authors.

### *Motivation*

Almost all of the editors were asked – and were urged to be candid about - what had motivated their decisions to take on editorial roles. Three main categories of factors emerged as principal motivators of editorship:

- *self-interest* – anticipation of enhancing their profiles as academics, and/or advancing their careers;
- *altruistic service* – a desire or concern to serve their research communities and advance their fields' research capacity and agendas;
- *by default* – having 'drifted' into the role or having taken it on without having planned to do so.

*Self-interest*: a minority (<4) of academics-as-editor interviewees admitted that their main, or a key, motivation to take on the role had been anticipated profile-enhancement and, by extension, career-advancement prospects. All except one were editors of relatively low-status journals. All expressed their belief, however, that – contrary to their expectations – they had received little or no recognition for their editorships, and hoped-for career-related benefits had failed to materialise. One editor who had, since taking on his editorship, been promoted to a professorship in his pre-92 university expressed his belief that his editorial role had had no influence on his promotion.

*Altruistic service*: the majority of editors reported having been motivated by a genuine interest in the role and by a wish or concern (which in some cases was expressed as a perception of duty) to play their parts in advancing their fields, through their journals. This was in fact also highlighted as a motivator by the two professional editors; since theirs are salaried posts, it is debateable whether, technically, their cases should be categorised as 'altruistic service', but both remarked that they found other people's research at least as

interesting as doing their own (each had had an earlier research career). The professional section editor spoke of his commitment to ‘serving’ his field’s research community – an expression that was echoed by several academics-as-editors; one STEMM professor, for example, commented: ‘I feel passionately that [names his field] needs support, y’know...; if I, who’s an active [academic in his field] can’t support the *Journal of [X]*, who can?’

Two academics-as-editors indicated that they had been influenced by what they had perceived as a need for improvement; their journals, they explained, had been ineffectively edited by their predecessors, under whose editorship the quality or quantity of published articles and the journals’ status had noticeably declined, and they felt there was a need for a change of direction and policy that they could, or should try to, provide.

*By default:* A small minority of editors reported having taken on the role almost by default, without having planned to do so. One – the editor of a social science journal that was affiliated with his/her university – explained how, finding him/herself, after a succession of professorial retirements or resignations, the only remaining professor in the field employed in her/his department, s/he had felt obliged to take on the editorship. Another arts and humanities journal editor had been her/his predecessor’s research assistant and, promoted to a senior lectureship by the time of his retirement and resignation from the editorship, had been invited by the editorial board to replace him, as what was termed ‘his natural successor’ in the rather small field that was the journal’s focus.

#### *What matters to editors? Interests, values and satisfaction*

To many editors indicators of their journal’s standing and status were of great concern; those whose journals had been accepted into the citation index generally took a keen interest in impact factors and related statistics, and those who believed theirs to be one of the leading journals in their field evidently enjoyed the reflected glory of such recognition. The bases of their motivation to take on editorial roles – particularly when such motivation represents a kind of altruistic service – is linked to editors’ values and to the factors that influence any fulfilment or satisfaction that they derive from the work. All of the editors reported that their prime concern was the quality of articles published in their journals – it seemed generally to be considered a matter of professional pride that, under their editorships, their journals should merit the approbation of the research communities that they served. This seemed to be as much a concern for the two professional editors as for the academics-as-editors, and that went beyond the issue of accountability to their employers; each conveyed what came across in his interview as a genuine passion for advancing his field by encouraging dissemination of the highest quality, cutting edge research:

The idea is that, every paper that we publish, for me, it has that “wow!”...I get to read some great manuscripts (professional section editor)

If you ask me what I care passionately about...I mean [*names the journal*] as an institution is something I care passionately about. ...And I think you’d find that everybody who works here would say the same: they don’t care about *me*, they don’t care about *my* bosses, it’s [*names the journal*] that they’re there for. You’ve gotta believe in it if you’re gonna be that passionate and committed. And that includes the journalism...so the idea of developing journalism that is discovery journalism, as opposed to simply reflecting what other people are saying, is important, and we have resources to do that, as well as publishing important science. ...It’s about content, ultimately. If you’re the editor of a journal... it’s the content. ...There’s no question that this is my ideal job because I am genuinely interested in [*names the field that is the journal’s focus*] (professional editor-in-chief).

## EDITORIAL POWER: ITS PREVALENCE AND NATURE

To what extent, and in what ways, is the exercise of power evident in academic journal editors’ professionalism?

Responses to the three questionnaire items (8h, 9e, 9f) that explicitly addressed this issue indicate widespread recognition that editors wield considerable power through their decisions about submission acceptances.

Respondents expressed much less certainty, however, about whether or not such power is excessive. As Table 7 indicates, in response to the statement: *Individual journal editors exercise considerable power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers*, over 60% of this item's respondents selected a clear affirmative response and a further 21.2% opted for qualified agreement ('slightly agree').

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	147	17.7	17.9
	agree	365	44.0	44.5
	slightly agree	176	21.2	21.5
	neither agree nor disagree	62	7.5	7.6
	disagree slightly	27	3.3	3.3
	disagree	16	1.9	2.0
	strongly disagree	4	.5	.5
	unsure/difficult to answer	23	2.8	2.8
	Total	820	98.8	100.0
Missing	System	10	1.2	
Total		830	100.0	

**Table 7:** author questionnaire responses to the statement: '*Individual journal editors exercise considerable power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers*'.

Slightly greater agreement was expressed in relation to the notion of collective – rather than individual - editorial power; in response to the statement: *Collectively, academic journal editors wield considerable power within their disciplinary/subject research communities*, over 64% of this item's respondents selected a clear affirmative response and a further 20% opted for qualified agreement (shown in Table 8).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	197	23.7	24.0
	agree	330	39.8	40.1
	slightly agree	166	20.0	20.2
	neither agree nor disagree	60	7.2	7.3
	disagree slightly	33	4.0	4.0
	disagree	19	2.3	2.3
	strongly disagree	1	.1	.1
	unsure/difficult to answer	16	1.9	1.9
	Total	822	99.0	100.0
Missing	System	8	1.0	
Total		830	100.0	

**Table 8:** author questionnaire responses to the statement: '*Collectively, academic journal editors wield considerable power within their disciplinary/subject research communities*'.

Yet in response to the statement: *Individual journal editors exercise too much power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers*, as Table 9 shows, a quarter of this item's respondents were undecided, and amongst the remainder the tendency towards disagreement was greater than the tendency towards agreement.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
strongly agree	41	4.9	5.0
agree	75	9.0	9.1
slightly agree	149	18.0	18.1
neither agree nor disagree	213	25.7	25.9
Valid disagree slightly	128	15.4	15.6
disagree	152	18.3	18.5
strongly disagree	28	3.4	3.4
unsure/difficult to answer	37	4.5	4.5
Total	823	99.2	100.0
Missing System	7	.8	
Total	830	100.0	

**Table 9:** author questionnaire responses to the statement: ‘Individual journal editors exercise too much power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers.’

Many of the questionnaire items were directed at uncovering the extent of more implicit perceptions of editorial power – particularly indirect or subtle manifestations of power that may not necessarily be recognised as such, such as the impact of editorial decision-making on people’s careers, or influences on authors’ journal submission-related choices and decisions. In an attempt to gauge general levels of their satisfaction with editorial processes and practices, we invited authors to share with us their own experiences – not only by responding to specific closed items but also by leaving comments. Space restrictions preclude extensive presentation of these data, but an overview of the quantitative data indicates broad acceptance amongst the sample that, in relation to getting published, the systems, procedures and processes in place are, for the most part, fit for purpose and acceptable, and that journal editors – though considered to be of somewhat variable quality – are, *on the whole*, proficient, well-intentioned, and relatively unproblematic. We emphasise that this broad brush picture represents a rough sketch, but it implies that the professionalism that authors expect of or want from journal editors (which equates, in Evans’s [2011] terminology, to ‘demanded’ or ‘requested’ professionalism) is broadly congruent with editors’ enacted professionalism.

The qualitative questionnaire data, however, tell a somewhat different tale. Open-ended items provided opportunities for respondents to leave comments at four points. Prompting 121 responses, the first of these invited indications of ‘other’ factors (i.e. those not listed as options for selection) that influence authors’ decisions on where to submit articles. The other three open-ended items attracted 217; 184; and 110 comments relating respectively to respondents’ perceived unsatisfactory and satisfactory experiences of journal editors, and to general perspectives on academic journal publishing and editorship. Drawing upon a small sample of illustrative comments from questionnaire respondents, we present below a broad indication of the evident nature and bases of authors’ dissatisfaction.

#### *Room for improvement? Authors’ reported unsatisfactory experiences*

Out of a wide range of reported unsatisfactory experiences, four main sources of author dissatisfaction emerged:

- *Ethical issues* – complaints of various forms of what were presented as ethically dubious editorial practice. Respondents’ comments included:
  - A co-author who was an editor removed my name from the paper (when I was a post-doc);
  - One notices that successfully published articles in some journals include mandatory citations of the work of the editor/s. Is this part of the “guidance and things to think about in resubmitting” process? one wonders!;
  - I had a journal article rejected due to lack of recent references from that journal. Clearly an attempt to maintain their high impact factor;
  - One clearly biased editor who chose to ignore positive reviews, and relied on the reviews of his colleagues, because it suited his political agenda;

- The editor explicitly asked us to revise and add citations to recent papers from this journal (the “impact factor game”). Unfortunately (but not unsurprisingly), this is a journal with high IF (but it is on my black list now).
- *Turnaround timescale* – complaints of submitted papers languishing in the system for far longer than was considered acceptable. Respondents’ comments included:
  - 8 months to review a paper, with little apparent effort to speed up the process;
  - A couple of times have experienced very long late decisions - e.g. a year to turnaround a decision on an article - and this has held up publication of my work. As an editor, I am sympathetic for reasons why this may have happened, but still feel such a lengthy time period is unacceptable;
  - A journal took longer than a year to come to a decision at an early stage of my career when it was difficult to afford this. The editor failed to reply to my queries and to speed things up;
  - The process took five years, 10 reviewers and three editors and they rejected the paper.
- *Abrogation of editorial responsibilities* – complaints that by deferring too readily to reviewers’ recommendations, editors were cutting corners and not actually ‘editing’. Respondents’ comments included:
  - Reviewer recommended “accept with minor corrections” but the paper was rejected on the basis of the first one. The editor, who was afraid of the first reviewer, refused to discuss the rejection;
  - A lack of editorial input beyond “fielding” reviewers’ comments;
  - An invited paper for which one of the referees was clearly not competent to judge the work and despite my detailed response to their comments, the editors refused to reconsider their decision;
  - Associate editor stuck by the referee’s comments even though I proved them to be scientifically incorrect;
  - Deferring too much to reviewers, who can be highly partisan;
  - The most common is to receive both positive and negative reviews for the same submission and the editor simply say “respond to the comments” even though clearly the reviews say polar opposites;
  - Ill-informed and disingenuous reviews not over-ruled by editor who should know better and have confidence to overrule.
- *Seemingly irrational or unexplained editorial decision-making* (or decision-making whose articulated rationale was unacceptable). Respondents’ comments included:
  - A rejection early in my career, but no feedback offered even when requested;
  - Lack of transparency on reasons and procedure why a submitted article has been rejected even without comments from reviewers;
  - I have found some journal editors to decide not to send a paper out for review and reject based on “scope” issues without clearly explaining why they rejected the paper;
  - Had editor dismiss without appropriate explanation;
  - Sent out for review, gets very good reviews, but rejected;
  - Unjustified decisions to reject, with just a bland, “not relevant enough” or, “we get too many submissions”.

It is important, however, to apply caution in considering the significance of the 217 predominantly negative assessments of journal editors’ professionalism. By definition, almost all of these assessments – as some respondents implied – refer to isolated and generally atypical occurrences that fall below the level of ‘service’ that prevails and is accepted as the norm. This cautious perspective is supported by the interview data; collectively, author interviewees reported relatively few negative experiences, and any that were identified were evidently considered outside the norm. Human nature being as it is, respondents who have an axe to grind or a cause to champion are much more inclined to participate in an exercise – such as our questionnaire - that allows them to vent their frustration and irritation than they would be inclined to share positive, but largely unremarkable, experiences that pass them by without provoking strong attitudinal or emotional responses.

Finally, it is important to recognise that, as with most situations, there are often many sides to what appear the most straightforward and uncomplicated stories - including the world of academic publishing and editorial practice and professionalism. In terms of power, our findings revealed that – contrary to the impressions that many of our respondents seemed to have formed - editors do not necessarily hold all the cards; sometimes they (the cards) are stacked against them, sometimes they share out the spoils of a winning hand, and sometimes they choose not to play the game.

## THE ‘OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN’: POWERLESSNESS, EMPOWERMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN EDITORIAL PRACTICE

If academic publishing is perceived as a power game, it may seem at first glance that it is editors who call all the shots and, without the support and protection offered by institutional systems and structures that they may draw upon in other areas of their working lives, authors are largely powerless in the face of unsatisfactory editorial practice. Our findings suggest that, whilst this may be the case, it is often so to a limited degree, and there are occasions and circumstances when the tables of power and influence are turned on editors, or when they choose to turn them. We present from our findings four such indicative kinds of cases that represent an ‘other side of the coin’ perspective on power and influence in academic publishing.

### *The ‘prima donna’ author?*

Many of our respondents and interviewees articulated a perception that editors of the highest rated journals – those with the highest impact factors in their fields – wield considerable power insofar as they not only drive their fields’ research agendas, but also enjoy the luxury of being inundated with such a plethora of submissions that they can pick and choose at will, insensitive to the impact of their decisions on eager, hopeful authors, whose careers may consequently be made or broken. Within what was something of a tirade against the powerful dominance of the top journals in his field, selected comments made by one of our academics-as-editor interviewees – a male STEM professor – are indicative of this perception:

I know that so much about publishing – not necessarily the journal I edit, because its impact factor’s not out there – but the really high end journals, it’s luck. So much of whether you get a paper in is *luck*! Are you doing something that the editor happens to know something about? Is it trendy at that point in time? Have you got the right name on the paper? Has something else come in at the same time from a bigger lab than yours?...These are all things that will influence the top journals...And I think that that kind of power that they exert makes or breaks careers.

...And junior researchers know that...if they get their one *Nature* paper...I have a lot of students who I see, and that’s *all* they talk about – they’re *obsessed* with it!

...The journals, *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell*...they *absolutely* set the research agenda; y’know, what they publish will, by default, tell the research community what is good and top-end science. So if they happen to be publishing on stem cell work, everyone thinks stem cell work is important, y’know. If the stem cell work had been published in *my* journal there wouldn’t be anywhere nearly as much of a public awareness, and money, and things, in the field. So...they are professional editors – they’re not academics, and they see things very differently. And they are paid to maximise the revenue generation by the journal, and to maximise the impact factor of a journal.

...They need to keep a kind of a “We’re the editors; you’re trying to get through our wall”.

Yet, representing the flip side of this perspective, the two professional journal editors in our sample both spoke of continually having to court and win over prominent researchers and researchers whose work they desperately wanted to secure as publications in their high impact factor journals:

We keep our eyes on the best papers we know are on the horizon, and do what we can to get them. ...Who are the key players – the best academics – working on a certain topic? You just make them know – because, of course, *every* journal wants that, so they’re getting visitors all the time – and they’ll play us off against each other, and all sorts of stuff! But, y’know, what’re they playing us off *against*? I mean, we can’t give them anything other than

publication. ...I mean, sometimes we might guarantee them a *cover*...but, it's nothing. It's the same old thing: the way you compete is to be good at your job...to let them feel that you understand what they're on about (professional editor-in-chief).

Notwithstanding the different hierarchy of power that it exposes - for it is a minority of researchers who will find themselves in such enviably advantageous positions of being able to play off one editor against another - this snapshot of editorial working life in the fast lane of high impact factor journal publishing conjures up images of power games that appear to be skilfully played by authors who know how to tip the balance of power away from editors and in their (the authors') favour. Going some way towards debunking any myth of professional editors' omnipotence, cases such as this reveal that it is sometimes authors who call the shots.

#### *The fruitless pursuit of publishable copy*

A similar form of power differential between editors and authors was evident in the cases of a small number (<4) of academic-as-editor interviewees who related their frustration and disappointment in trying to secure good quality articles for publication in their journals. These academics all edited recently established journals, which, since they (the journals) had no reputational status and - more significantly - no impact factors, were unattractive to all except inexperienced authors who typically, the editors complained, submitted low quality articles. Such cases exemplify editorial impotence, for these editors found themselves with little choice other than to try to solicit publishable articles from experienced authors who considered it *infra dig* to publish in unknown, unestablished journals and who needed persuading or cajoling into doing so. Some editors reported having resorted to extensive editing of - to the point of practically re-writing - weak submissions in order to create enough copy to merit going to press. In doing so, they generously empowered those inexperienced authors whose work would otherwise have remained unpublishable.

#### *The empowering editor*

Whilst editors desperate to secure publishable copy found themselves empowering by default, our interview-generated data revealed a variety of examples of editors' purposeful empowerment of authors. Several academics-as-editors - usually, though not exclusively, of relatively low status journals (by the standards of their respective fields) - spoke of mentoring-type editorship that involved their working with early career authors to bring their submissions up to publishable quality. A female arts and humanities professor who edited two journals whose substantive focus attracted submissions from authors in developing countries, explained that her commitment to empowering these authors involved working extensively with them, correcting their English, and commissioning articles from them. And a male editor of a STEMM journal confessed to sometimes empowering junior academics and those who have yet to make names for themselves:

I think maybe sometimes I try and over-compensate, and when it's a junior lab - I mean often, if it's a lab you've not come across, or if they're clearly junior researchers, as an editor I'm often more willing to give them leeway by...if I'd normally have rejected the paper I might say, "Well, I'm going to give you a chance to revise, but here's a list of the things you really need to do". So you try and - in many ways really you give them *more* help...you'd be more prescriptive to them about what you think they need to do, and you offer help; you say, like, y'know, "this is how I would attempt to do this", or whatever.

#### *Editorial responsibility*

Consciously-practised empowerment of the kind outlined above is closely aligned with the responsibility that several editors identified as a key dimension of their editorial professionalism. They did not necessarily deny wielding power; rather, they tended to emphasise their awareness of the responsibility that they believed came with power. Asked if he was ever conscious of wielding power over authors whose careers his decisions could contribute towards making or breaking, a male STEMM journal editor responded:

Yeah; I hate it! (slight embarrassed laugh) It's one of the things that keeps me awake at night (another slight laugh). ...You know, you see some really, really good scientists lost...from the...academy, because they were unlucky. And that solely rests with the decisions made by the editors. ...And so, although the journal I edit's a much lower level than that, I am always aware of that...and, y'know, the last thing I want to do is let through papers that're substandard because you feel sorry for someone. But, at the same time, you're acutely aware of the, y'know...these papers are what people's careers are made or broken on.

Er...and that matters...and, yeah, so it weighs very heavily on me...it weighs very heavily on me.

A male social sciences journal editor expressed similar sentiments, describing his feelings of guilt when, from time to time, he must respond negatively to pleas from overseas-based authors to publish their papers because they need high quality publications to secure jobs in their developing countries. And the professional section editor of a high impact STEMM journal highlighted what he saw as the distinction between power and responsibility that he recognised as a key dimension of his editorship:

I tend to think of it more as being about the responsibility of the editor, rather than the power. We get asked this a lot: "How do I feel about having all this power as an editor for [names the journal]?" ...My personal feeling is that it's a responsibility. My responsibility is to the journal: to make sure that I publish the best [names the field] that I can, and then to the field, to make sure that I don't publish things that're clearly not right. But, when people ask me it, what they really mean is: your decisions get to make or break careers. But, actually, that's a responsibility – it is power, but in my mind it's a responsibility – it's a responsibility that's shared with...funding panels, and hiring panels. And there's been a tendency to defer some of their responsibility to journal editors, and actually, it's the academics that give responsibility away to journals, rather than journals taking that responsibility. If grant funding panels and hiring panels in institutions spent more time – were able to spend more time...which means more money - to have enough staff to devote to this, to spend more time interviewing people face-to-face, sitting down talking with them about their work, and reading their back catalogue of literature, then you would make more informed decisions at hiring.

... So, I'm aware that there is responsibility in the decisions that I take, and I take responsibility for those decisions. But, when that question's levelled at us, I do try to point out that it's a responsibility that's shared (professional section editor).

Does rebranding power as responsibility, then, have implications for academic journal editors' professionalism and on how their professionalism impacts upon academics in their roles as researchers and authors? In the section below we briefly consider this, and related, questions in the light of our research findings.



## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Whilst space restrictions preclude our delving into the conceptual analyses and philosophical discussion that the subject merits, and drawing upon its extensive literature base, we make the observation that, as our research has revealed and as we have tried to convey in presenting our findings, power is a nuanced and variable form of agency that ebbs and flows as waves created by relational encounters – some as silent and unobtrusive ripples, others as thunderous, crashing breakers. When does influence become power? - it is clear that the line separating the two is a fine one - and where and how do responsibility and leadership enter and fit into the equation? If we had labelled our study one of academic journal editors' *leadership*, rather than of their *power*, would our data collection and analysis have been significantly different from as they are reported above? And how might our findings have differed from those presented here?

Our research uncovered relatively little support and justification for casting and portraying academic journal editors as excessively powerful gatekeepers who jealously guard and control ingress into, and progression within, the academy. Certainly, some of the vignettes and observations that we collected from authors displayed frustration, irritation, disappointment, anger and incredulity – but such perceptions will very likely feature in any similar kind of study that seeks first-hand accounts of workplace relations and collegial interaction.

The overall picture to emerge from our study was one of what is generally accepted as an imperfect system (of academic journal publishing) operating in an imperfect world, but a system that, barring the occasional hiccup, is fit for purpose, partly because those who (along with others) play key roles in perpetuating it – academic journal editors – are essentially well-intentioned, conscientious, hard-working and proficient. Such perceptions notwithstanding, there was widespread recognition that journal editors inevitably wield power – some considerably more than others – but that this is generally not a malignant or oppressive form of agency. For their part, editors themselves tended to play down or to explain away and justify their power; one described himself as a 'guardian' of the field; others evidently deflected some of their potency into their empowerment of others.

The nature of the editorial professionalism that our research revealed authors to want or expect – reflecting the self-interested dimension that underpins its delineation - is predictably focused on better meeting authors' needs by greater editorial responsiveness. Authors' wish-list includes, *inter alia*: more timely decisions on their submissions, more transparency around editorial decision-making, more editorial accountability, and more fairness. Above all, authors seem, for the most part, to want editors to take on more of what they (authors) perceive as editorial work; this includes more thorough reading of submissions and more decision-making without excessive reviewer input. It is editors, many respondents argued, not reviewers, who should make the final, post-resubmission, decision on whether or not the paper is publishable; reviewers should be used as advisors, not as proxies for the editor.

The 'shape' of 'demanded' or 'requested' editorial professionalism thus differs from that of 'enacted' editorial professionalism principally in relation to its productive, processual and, to some extent, procedural, elements<sup>1</sup>: editors are effectively being 'asked' to take on more of the tasks that they typically delegate to reviewers and to explain fully and promptly what influenced the ways in which they carried out those tasks. It also differs in relation to the comprehensive element, for if editors are to be expected to take on more of the decision making that they have traditionally delegated to reviewers, their substantive - and in many cases, methodological - knowledge would in most cases need to be considerably widened; as one academic-as-editor remarked, 'I take the point the reviewers are supposed to be simply *advising* the editor, but, I'm only an expert in some areas...I *have* to rely on the reviewers' comments; they are invited precisely because it's their precise area'. The professional editors whom we interviewed, on the other hand, highlighted their own extensive knowledge which, they emphasised, was integral to their work and required continuous library research to maintain it as fit for purpose.

Realistically, for it to be applied to academics-as-editors, the 'demanded' or 'requested' editorial professionalism that has emerged from our research requires the injection into the system of considerably more resources – in particular, and fundamentally, more editorial time. But our findings revealed –

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1 on page 6, and related explanation of this model of professionalism.

unsurprisingly - that academics-as-editors already have precious little spare time at their disposal. Several complained that the editorial role created unwelcome pressures and was becoming something of a bind rather than a source of satisfaction; some (a minority) confessed to wanting to give it up at the earliest opportunity; most had taken it on for a limited period. This represents a stark contrast to the accounts of the two professional editors in our sample, both of who readily described their jobs as their ideal jobs, from which they reported deriving enormous fulfilment. None of the academics-as-editors articulated comparable enthusiasm for their editorial work. Within an academic culture that is defined by a prevalence of working to excess, or what Gornall and Salisbury (2012) call 'hyper-professionalism', editorial work that is in many respects considered an add-on to, rather than an extra dimension of, the main job of being an academic represents a tension-creating competing demand that is not always or consistently perceived positively. Extending the parameters of a role that is in many cases considered a duty rather than a source of pleasure – and, moreover, is generally unremunerated - does not seem a feasible solution.

Professional editors, however, are quite a different kettle of fish. Whilst in our study this constituency certainly did not escape criticism, the accounts of their working lives conveyed by the two professional editors whom we interviewed suggest that their roles seem more attuned to the preferences expressed by authors than are the editorial roles typically carried out by academics. As these two professional editors portrayed it, their enacted professionalism is in many – though not all – respects a closer match to the 'demanded' or 'requested' editorial professionalism delineated by authors.

Is there then a lesson here that may usefully be applied to the development of academic journal editing? Is professional editorship the way forward for a 21<sup>st</sup> century academic world, which with each passing year seems to sit increasingly easily at the juncture with the commercial, market-led, private sector, world? Should full-time professional academic journal editing become the norm, rather than the exception - carried out by those who are content to place other people's research, rather than their own, at the heart of their work? Would the academy be better served by such an evolution? Or would such an initiative lead to the lowering of academic standards, with the commercial sector popularising and dumbing down the currency of the knowledge economy that would be squeezed within its tightening grip? Is professional academic journal editing in fact commercially feasible outside the STEMM disciplines? And if the evolution towards mass full-time professional journal editorship seems a step too far, then could halfway measures offer an acceptable compromise, with the commercial sector - the publishers – committing much greater proportions of their profits to financing considerably more support for journal editors than has hitherto been the case, and with academics-as-editors being released to focus on their editorships on a full-time or at least a half-time basis for a specified finite period, with their salary costs covered by publishers and, where applicable, learned societies? Such issues merit serious consideration by the academic community.

Finally – to return briefly to a point that we raise at the beginning of this section - there is mileage, we suggest, in recognising and celebrating journal editors as leaders – specifically, as *academic* leaders – and in incorporating consideration of this recognition into editorial appointments and role specifications, which may inject greater clarity into what editors may expect to do, and what others expect them to do. Many journal editors are professors, and as such they are likely to be familiar with the key responsibilities that are generally considered part and parcel of academic leadership: demonstrating exemplary scholarship; leading the research field; and encouraging and nurturing future generations of academics. By incorporating journal editorship within their professional – their academic – identities, rather than perceiving it as an add-on role that may interfere with, as often as it supports and reinforces, their being academics, editors may better align their enacted professionalism with the editorial professionalism that others demand or expect of them.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: TEMPLATE OF PARTICIPATION INVITATION EMAILED TO AUTHORS

Dear .....

Please excuse my contacting you out of the blue; I found your webpage in a random search of academics and am requesting your participation in a questionnaire that is part of one of my funded studies. The questionnaire takes around 4 minutes to complete.

The project, 'Academic journal editors' professionalism: perceptions of power, proficiency and personal agendas', is funded by the Society for Research into Higher Education (<http://www.srhe.ac.uk/>). It involves data collection from two constituencies: academic journal editors, and authors (actual and aspiring) across all disciplines, and I would be most appreciative if you, as an author, would spare around 4 minutes to complete the short online questionnaire, which may be accessed here: [https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/getting\\_published/](https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/getting_published/) . If you choose not to add comments you may find that you complete the questionnaire in less than 4 minutes. (Indeed, someone whom I recently asked to complete it emailed me back when she had done so: '3.5 minutes (though no comments), so not a burden at all! Good luck with the project!').

The purpose of the questionnaire is to uncover something of people's experiences of getting published in academic journals (our study's focus doesn't encompass authorship of books or chapters) and their perceptions of journal editors. Further details on the project are presented on the welcome page of the questionnaire, reached via the links above and below, but if you would like to know more I shall be happy to send you a copy of the research objectives and research questions, and to answer any questions you have. Even if you've been – or still are – a journal editor, we'd like you to respond to this questionnaire as, and from the perspective of, an author.

PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT FULL ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR THIS STUDY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE, AND YOUR ANONYMITY WILL BE ENSURED IN ALL DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS. INDEED, IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO LEAVE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS AT THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE, YOUR IDENTITY AS A RESPONDENT WILL REMAIN UNKNOWN TO US.

Would you be kind enough to take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to respond to the questionnaire? If so, please access it at this link: [https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/getting\\_published/](https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/getting_published/)

Many thanks, in anticipation.

Best wishes,

Linda Evans

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: EDITORS

Background information – brief biography – editorial experience, etc.

### **1. What is the nature of editorial practice? – what does it ‘look like’; what processes & procedures does it involve?**

Talk me through how you actually do the editorship job – what different specific tasks are you responsible for? How do you organise the time that you devote to the editorship? Talk me through specific processes/tasks.

Do you:

Read every submitted article? In how much detail?

Read every review?

Check on/clarify reviewers’ comments?

Select reviewers yourself? – on what basis?

Add your own assessments to what authors receive?

To what extent – and how – do you respond to ‘complaints’ from authors?

### **2. What are the bases of editors’ decisions? – who and what influences them and why, and to what extent?**

What do you actually make decisions on?

How do you go about making these decisions? – do you make them independently of others, or do you involve others?

To what extent are you influenced by:

- Reviewers – does it depend on the reviewer?
- Editorial board members? – do some have more influence than others?
- Author(s)? – what specific characteristics of the author?
- What other journals are doing?
- External issues – current discourses, etc?

What do you consider to be the role of reviewers, fundamentally? Do you think the original purpose of reviewing has been obscured or diminished?

Can you recall/share with any ‘eventful’ or memorable incidents or situations?

Is there anything that could make your work as editor easier or simpler?

### **3. What motivates people to become and remain journal editors and what influences (positively and negatively) their motivation, morale and satisfaction? – what are the positive and negative aspects of the role?**

What made you want to become and editor? – please be entirely honest

Has the role turned out as you anticipated?

Has it evolved over the time you’ve been doing it? Have you been responsible for changing it?

Is it the role that you would ideally like? What would/could make it more ideal for you?

Do you enjoy all aspects of it, or are some aspects better than others? Which? Why?

What aspects of the role, if any, give you satisfaction? – discuss the bases of the satisfaction.

### **4. What are the key current and future issues and challenges associated with editorial work, and how are these (or might these) be addressed and/or impact upon the editorial role?**

How has the prospect of open access publishing impacted – if at all – on your role?

And on your attitudes to it?

What's the biggest challenge that you face, as editor? Or: What are the biggest challenges currently facing journal editors?

**5. What perceptions of the journal editor role, responsibilities and professionalism - and of how these translate into power - are held by: a) editors themselves, and b) aspiring or actual/experienced authors?**

Our project is examining perceptions of journal editors' power. Do you feel that you exercise power? – individually, or collectively, along with other academic journal editors?

In what respects is this power manifested? What does it apply to?

What responsibility towards others, or towards institutions, do you feel you have?  
How do these manifest/present themselves?

**6. What defines a proficient journal editor? – what are the criteria for proficiency and who determines them?**

I've heard people refer to specific journal editors as being good or bad – efficient or inefficient, etc. – I've heard positive and negative evaluations expressed. In all honesty, what sort of evaluations of you as an editor do you think people would make?

Does it depend on which people they are? – editorial board colleagues; fellow editors; your admin. assistant; your publishers; authors?

How would you evaluate your own performance?

Are you proficient? Have you always been proficient?

Are you paid for doing the role?

To what extent do you feel that, because it's an add-on, you needn't prioritise it?

Do you feel a responsibility towards the publishers? The learned society (and its members)?  
Whose evaluations matter the most to you? Why?

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: AUTHORS

Background information – brief biography – experience of writing for publication, etc.

1. What are your sources of job satisfaction and fulfilment?  
Is writing for publication a source of fulfilment, or do you find it a chore? (How much pressure – if any – is there on you to publish?)  
Do you find it challenging/difficult, or does it come easy to you?  
Do you mainly write journal articles or chapters in edited books, or monographs?  
Which do you consider the more/most enjoyable and fulfilling?  
Which is the more/most prestigious?
2. How seriously do you take writing for publication?  
Do you look at how many citations you get?  
Do you know what your h-index is?  
**What's your purpose in writing for publication?** (ascertain her/his agenda?)  
What are your ambitions as an academic author, in terms of profile-building?  
Or: How prolific are you in relation to others in your field?
3. What influences your decision on which journals to submit to?
4. Talk me through what happens when you get a rejection?  
What's your attitudinal response?  
What do you do – do you re-write, or do you look to submit elsewhere immediately?
5. Have you ever challenged a decision on your submission? Have you ever complained to the editor or anyone else?  
Why not?  
What was the response?
6. Power – what perceptions (may be unconscious) of power do you have at various stages in the submission/publishing process? Do you ever feel that you are more or less impotent? Do you feel that the editor holds all the cards, or do you feel/have you ever felt a sense of agency – even power?  
What 'getting published' 'tricks' have you learned, over the years?
7. Tell me about any particularly satisfactory or unsatisfactory experiences you've had, as a journal author.
8. What are your wider perceptions/evaluations of academic journal publishing? Do you feel it's a game – if so, is it a game of chance? Are you cynical about it? Do you see it as part of the performativity culture in which we live? Or do you see it as a legitimate and effective means of disseminating new knowledge?
9. FOR THOSE WHO ARE ALSO EDITORS:  
You're also a journal editor; do you feel any tension between your perspectives as an editor and your perspectives as an author?  
Have/do your experiences as an author influence(d) your perspectives and practice as an editor – and vice versa?
10. Are there any ways in which the practice of getting published in academic journals could be improved, or do you consider it perfectly satisfactory as it is?  
Would you prefer referees not to be anonymous?  
Do you feel there should be more of a right of appeal against decisions?  
Do you feel that editors are effective/proficient?
11. Why do you think people become journal editors? Would you like to be one?

12. Do you behave differently towards editors, when you encounter them? Do you find yourself being careful not to offend them, or trying to impress them?

12. A lot of journal editors whom I've interviewed spoke of the developmental aspects of the role, and emphasised how seriously they take it. Have you ever felt that an editor was contributing to your professional development – your development as an author? How effectively did s/he do so?



## APPENDIX D: AUTHOR QUESTIONNAIRE (TYPESCRIPT COPY OF ONLINE VERSION)

1. (This item sought respondents' informed consent.)

**2. Which of the following three descriptors best applies to you?**

*Early career academic/researcher*

*Mid-career academic/researcher*

*Senior academic/researcher*

**3. Please indicate your current academic grade or status**

*Lecturer/assistant professor*

*Senior lecturer/associate professor*

*Principal lecturer*

*Reader/associate professor*

*Professor*

*Research assistant*

*Research fellow/associate*

*Senior research fellow/associate*

*Principal research fellow/associate*

*Professorial research fellow/associate*

**4. The broad disciplines listed below reflect the foci of the UK's research councils. Please indicate the discipline with which you most (often) associate yourself (if your work is cross- or inter-disciplinary, please select the one which reflects your REF or RAE entry, if applicable)**

*Arts & humanities*

*Social sciences & economics*

*Engineering, physical sciences & mathematics*

*Biotechnology & biological sciences*

*Medical research*

*Natural environment*

*Sciences & technology facilities*

**5. Please indicate your gender**

*Male*

*Female*

**6. Please indicate the extent of any journal editorial responsibilities that you hold or have held in the past.**

6.a. *Editor of one or more academic journals*

6.b. *Associate editor of one or more academic journals*

6.c. *Reviews editor of one or more academic journals*

6.d. *Member of the editorial board of one or more academic journals*

### Section 3: YOUR EXPERIENCES OF GETTING PUBLISHED AND/OR OF ACADEMIC JOURNAL EDITORS

**7. If you have ever initiated contact with a journal editor or associate/section editor (by any means e.g. email; telephone, face-to-face meeting, etc.) in relation to any aspect or stage of getting your own work published, how satisfied were you with the response(s)?**

*I have never initiated such contact*

*I was very satisfied*

*I was fairly satisfied*

*It has varied -- I have been partly/sometimes satisfied and partly/sometimes not*

*I was mainly dissatisfied*

*I was very dissatisfied*

*Unsure/difficult to answer*

**8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements**

8.a. In relation to getting my own work published, I have found academic journal editors generally helpful and supportive.

*strongly agree*

*agree*

*slightly agree*

*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*

*disagree*

*strongly disagree*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.b. Most academic journal editors have made what I consider fair decisions on my submissions.

*strongly agree*

*agree*

*slightly agree*

*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*

*disagree*

*strongly disagree*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.c. I have encountered at least one academic journal editor who failed to accept or notice the weaknesses of a reviewer's report on my submitted work.

*strongly agree*

*agree*

*slightly agree*

*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*

*disagree*

*strongly disagree*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.d. Academic journal editors should not rely solely on reviewers' comments but should use them for guidance only.

*strongly agree*

*agree*

*slightly agree*

*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*

*disagree*

*strongly disagree*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.e. Most academic journal editors are too busy to make their own judgements on the quality of submissions -- they have no choice but to rely on reviewers' reports.

*strongly agree*

*agree*

*slightly agree*

*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*

*disagree*

*strongly disagree*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.f. The peer review process (in journal publishing) is, for the most part, effective.

*strongly agree*

*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.g. The peer review process (in journal publishing) is, for the most part, fair.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

8.h. Collectively, academic journal editors wield considerable power within their disciplinary/subject research communities.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

**9. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements**

9.a. My career has been adversely affected by one or more editorial decisions on, or response to, my submitted work.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.b. I have experienced at least one 'bad' or unfair editorial decision on, or response to, my submitted work.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.c. I have experienced at least one editorial decision on my submitted work that I consider to represent unexpected fairness or professional generosity.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*

*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.d. In my experience, most academic journal editors are proficient at discharging their editorial roles and responsibilities.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.e. Individual journal editors exercise considerable power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.f. Individual journal editors exercise too much power through their right to decide whether to accept or reject papers.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.g. The quality of academic journal editors is very variable.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

9.h. The journals with the highest impact factors generally publish the most scholarly articles.

*strongly agree*  
*agree*  
*slightly agree*  
*neither agree nor disagree*  
*disagree slightly*  
*disagree*  
*strongly disagree*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

Section 4: YOUR AUTHORIAL PRACTICE

**10. When choosing which journal to submit to, please indicate the extent to which you are generally influenced by:**

10.a. Who the editor is

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.b. The editorial board membership

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.c. The editorial advisory board

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.d. The journal's ranking or impact factor

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.e. Your previous experience of submitting to the journal

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.f. The general quality of the articles published in the journal

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*

*it depends on the circumstances*

*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*

*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.g. Who else chooses to be published in the journal

*this is extremely important to me*

*this is somewhat important to me*

*this is not important to me*  
*it depends on the circumstances*  
*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.h. The topic(s) covered by the journal  
*this is extremely important to me*  
*this is somewhat important to me*  
*this is not important to me*  
*it depends on the circumstances*  
*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.i. The journal's editorial or reviewing policy  
*this is extremely important to me*  
*this is somewhat important to me*  
*this is not important to me*  
*it depends on the circumstances*  
*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.j. The journal's word limit policy  
*this is extremely important to me*  
*this is somewhat important to me*  
*this is not important to me*  
*it depends on the circumstances*  
*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.k. Recommendation/advice from colleagues  
*this is extremely important to me*  
*this is somewhat important to me*  
*this is not important to me*  
*it depends on the circumstances*  
*this has never occurred to me as being relevant*  
*unsure/difficult to answer*

10.l. Other factors -- please specify below

**11. If you answered 'other factors' above please provide further details.**

**12. Do you recall any unusually unsatisfactory experiences relating to a journal editor's interaction with you as an author or to his/her handling of your submission?**

*No*

*Yes -- many such experiences*

*Yes -- a few such experiences*

*Yes -- one such experience*

*Unsure/difficult to answer*

**12.a. If you wish to elaborate on your response, please do so in the box below. (You may also wish to volunteer to participate in a follow-up telephone interview -- see items 15-17 below.)**

**13. Do you recall any unusually positive/satisfactory experiences relating to a journal editor's interaction with you as an author or to his/her handling of your submission?**

*No*

*Yes -- many such experiences*

*Yes -- a few such experiences*

*Yes -- one such experience*  
*Unsure/difficult to answer*

**13.a. If you wish to elaborate on your response, please do so in the box below. (You may also wish to volunteer to participate in a follow-up telephone interview -- see items 15-17 below.)**

**14. If you wish to add further comments relevant to our research, or to elaborate on any of your responses, please feel free to do so in the box below. Remember that your anonymity is assured.**