



# Building a home for the social and interdisciplinary sciences and public health at *Science Advances*

Jennifer Earl, Section Editor, Social and Interdisciplinary Sciences and Public Health, *Science Advances*; Sociology and Criminal Justice, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, USA. Email: [jearl@udel.edu](mailto:jearl@udel.edu).

The imperative for rigorous and ground-breaking social science and interdisciplinary research becomes clearer every day. COVID-19 made ever more manifest the importance of understanding the social processes and inequalities involved in health and disease, not just the technical capacity to create, test, and deliver treatments and vaccines. Deeply understanding the processes involved in the spread of disinformation and misinformation as well as scientifically vetted ways to counter these scourges is essential for maintaining at least shreds of a shared social and political reality. Identifying with precision the direct and collateral consequences of public policies and, more generally, better understanding issues of the day (e.g., abortion access) by rigorously analyzing the scope and consequences of different forms of inequality, from poverty to racial/ethnic inequalities, to gender inequalities (including inside of the academy), among other inequalities, are crucial to truly and deeply understanding, and improving, our world. See Box 1 for published papers related to these areas.

This editorial is, on one hand, a celebration of the commitment of *Science Advances* to the social and interdisciplinary sciences. As the section editor for the Social and Interdisciplinary Sciences and Public Health, I have the pleasure of supporting the five teams that are responsible for reviewing and publishing the most rigorous and ground-breaking research spanning core social science disciplines (e.g., archeology, anthropology, political science, psychology, and sociology) and interdisciplinary research involving the social sciences, including computational social science research, data science, and public health, among other areas. One of the distinctive commitments of *Science Advances* is its enduring, lived, and expanding commitment to this full definition of science—one that embraces the science of atoms, neurons, languages, health, information, politics, people, groups, organizations, civilizations, and galaxies.

Simply put, a generalist science journal that does not include the social and interdisciplinary sciences and public health is not truly a generalist science journal. From its very first issue, *Science Advances* has understood this and published the highest quality research from these areas (1). That commitment endures to this day and is evident in every issue of *Science Advances*, where articles from our section are on the top of every

online Table of Contents. *Science Advances* is increasingly a sponsor of an array of relevant professional association conferences and senior *Science Advances* editorial members attend key meetings. Editorials and Focus articles also center on issues from the social and interdisciplinary sciences.

In another way, this editorial is a call for colleagues in the social and interdisciplinary sciences and public health to step up to take this mantle by submitting their best research to *Science Advances*. To acknowledge the distinctiveness of *Science Advances*' strong commitment to the social and interdisciplinary sciences is also to acknowledge the social sciences have not always had ready access, even for the best and most rigorous of research, to top generalist science journals. As a consequence, much of the best research has been published in the top journals of professional associations or in a developing legion of interdisciplinary journals.

For *Science Advances* to achieve its mission of publishing the best in science—whether it is the science of molecules or political systems—we need researchers to submit their best research for review. To be sure, thousands already are doing so: Our section collectively reviewed more than 1300 submissions last year. But, if one were to add up the submission queues of top professional association journals across the fields our section represents, we are receiving a fraction of the submissions we should be receiving if our fields share the goal of showcasing our most rigorous and impactful research with the general scientific community and, as a gold-open access journal, all communities.

There are many reasons to send your best work to us:

- **Timeliness:** While we have a very selective acceptance rate (it is in the single digits in our section), we desk reject quickly (in days, not weeks, in the vast majority of cases) and we only send to review articles that we view as likely to be competitively reviewed. Submission to publication, depending on the seriousness of revisions, can be only a matter of months, not the year or years that are typical in many social science journals.

- **Format flexibility:** Initial submission does not require a specific format for evaluation. For example, the same paper that could be reviewed by the *American Sociological Review* can be reviewed at *Science Advances* without reformatting.

Copyright © 2024 The Authors, some rights reserved; exclusive licensee American Association for the Advancement of Science. No claim to original U.S. Government Works. Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial License 4.0 (CC BY-NC).

**Box 1. The following is a small sample of the kinds of papers *Science Advances* regularly publishes in the Social and Interdisciplinary Sciences and Public Health.**

**Social processes and inequalities**

Transformation of social relationships in COVID-19 America: Remote communication may amplify political echo chambers, Lee *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/sciadv.adi1540](http://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/sciadv.adi1540).

Neighborhood socioeconomic inequality based on everyday mobility predicts COVID-19 infection in San Francisco, Seattle, and Wisconsin, Levy *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl3825](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl3825).

**Health and disease**

Complaints about excessive use of police force in women's neighborhoods and subsequent perinatal and cardiovascular health, Freedman *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl5417](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl5417).

Social media conversations reveal large psychological shifts caused by COVID-19's onset across U.S. cities, Ashokkumar *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abg7843](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abg7843).

**Disinformation and misinformation**

The social media context interferes with truth discernment, Epstein *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo6169](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo6169).

How do you solve a problem like misinformation? Calo *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abn0481](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abn0481).

Conservatives' susceptibility to political misperceptions: Garrett *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abf1234](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abf1234).

News credibility labels have limited average effects on news diet quality and fail to reduce misperceptions, Aslett *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl3844](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl3844).

**Public policy and current issues with social impact**

The population prevalence of solitary confinement, Pullen-Blasnik *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abj1928](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abj1928).

Barred from employment: More than half of unemployed men in their 30s had a criminal history of arrest, Bushway *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abj6992](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abj6992).

The impact of defense counsel at bail hearings, Anwar *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.ade3909](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.ade3909).

The use of differential privacy for census data and its impact on redistricting: The case of the 2020 U.S. Census, Kenny *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abk3283](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abk3283).

The "abortion imaginary": Shared perceptions and personal representations among everyday Americans, Bruce *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adj3135](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adj3135).

**Forms of inequality**

Poverty, not the poor, Brady, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adg1469](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adg1469).

Global impacts of extractive and industrial development projects on Indigenous Peoples' lifeways, lands, and rights, Scheidel *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.ade9557](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.ade9557).

If you rise, I fall: Equality is prevented by the misperception that it harms advantaged groups, Brown *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abm2385](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abm2385).

The intersectional privilege of white able-bodied heterosexual men in STEM, Cech, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo1558](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abo1558).

Gender and retention patterns among U.S. faculty, Spoon *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adi2205](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adi2205).

People use both heterogeneity and minority representation to evaluate diversity, Abascal *et al.*, [www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abf2507](http://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abf2507).

• Need-based discounts: *Science Advances* understands that not all research fields are similarly resourced nor are all researchers, even though all fields have vital contributions to make. Therefore, the journal has a financial hardship discount ([www.science.org/content/page/science-advances-licensing-and-charges](http://www.science.org/content/page/science-advances-licensing-and-charges)) for article processing charges (APC) to ensure all authors have equitable opportunities to publish. We are committed to publishing amazing science in an open and accessible format.

• Extraordinary impact: For the exceptional articles that make it through our rigorous review process, publication in *Science Advances* holds a wealth of advantages, from its enormous public and policy reach as a journal to its press support that facilitates media coverage and broader dissemination of published research. Within the research community, the journal has an exceptional impact factor, and publication in it is recognized as an absolutely stellar publication across disciplines.

To be sure, we are a very selective section in an already very selective journal. The most common outcome by far is a desk reject. While that is true, it is also the case that virtually every issue of *Science Advances* is led by extraordinary social and interdisciplinary science research that has made it through our rigorous review.

In a final sense, this editorial is an acknowledgment of and thank you to the exceptionally talented scholars who review, select, and develop the social and interdisciplinary sciences research published in *Science Advances*. As Holden Thorp wrote in his Editorial earlier this year (2), one of the distinctive elements of *Science Advances* compared to many other major generalist science journals is its commitment to practicing academic editors who are leaders in their fields of research. Our section's teams are led by world-class scholars ([www.science.org/content/page/science-advances-editorial-working-groups](http://www.science.org/content/page/science-advances-editorial-working-groups)) including Mark Aldenderfer, Aaron Clauset (who is also one of the founding editorial members of *Science Advances*), Graham Colditz, Jonathan Katz, and myself, and build on the efforts of 26 very accomplished associate editors.

– Jennifer Earl

**REFERENCES**

1. A. Clauset, S. Arbesman, D. B. Larremore, Systematic inequality and hierarchy in faculty hiring networks. *Sci. Adv.* **1**, e1400005 (2015).
2. H. H. Thorp, A new era at *Science Advances*. *Sci. Adv.* **10**, eadn6115 (2024).  
[10.1126/sciadv.adp7473](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adp7473)