Editorial

Title: JHE 50th anniversary: Generosity

When considering my time as co-editor of Journal of Human Evolution (JHE), and hence pondering the theme for this editorial in JHE's 50th year, one word kept popping into my mind. Generosity. Of course, there is a vast literature on the evolution of generosity, altruism, cooperation and prosociality (for an extensive review of the science of generosity, see Allen, 2018). But my thoughts about generosity were less about its origins and fitness benefits and more about the multiple instances of generosity I have observed, not simply via JHE but in our community as a whole.

A quick internet search on 'academic generosity' produced a huge array of scientific articles, blogs, and opinion pieces, along with at least one journal editorial (Biesta, 2013—I thought I was being so original). A theme that came up time and time again was the generosity of peer reviewers (e.g., Biesta, 2013; Dessell et al., 2020), which was one of my initial prompts. Given the number of papers submitted to academic journals each year and the time needed to review them (impossible to find a precise figure, but see Aczel et al., 2021 for an empirical analysis that gives an indication of scale), it is surprising that more invitations to review are not declined. In fact, many JHE reviewers seem to go out of their way to accept review requests. I'm unlikely to be the only JHE editor who has received an email from someone in the field along the lines of 'I have very dodgy internet signal, and only have a couple of minutes of battery left on my phone, but wanted to let you know that I will be back next week, and if you can wait until then, I'll be pleased to look at the manuscript'. Similarly, many reviewers take immense trouble to provide rigorous yet constructive reports, painstakingly unpacking arguments and putting them back together, delving into R code, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and spotting inconsistencies between text, tables, and figures, to name but a few examples.

Of course, not everyone agrees to review, and not all reviews are constructive. The costs and benefits, negatives and positives of peer review are well known (Kelly et al., 2014). Despite its long history—one of the earliest written accounts of peer review is by Ali Al Rahwi of Al Raha, Syria, nearly 2000 years ago in *The Ethics of the Physician* (Spier, 2002)—peer review is not yet an equal process. Double-anonymized reviewing was adopted by JHE several years ago, at the suggestion of the editorial board, and despite its limitations there is good evidence that it helps to reduce bias (Tomkins et al., 2017). Some people don't get asked to review (Setchell and Gordon, 2018), and although publishers are now routinely reminding editors to think about the diversity of their reviewer and editorial pools, this is something that JHE has been trying to do for much longer, and must continue striving to improve. Getting diverse views on a piece of scientific work helps to protect against 'group think' (sometimes to the detriment of the authors but to the benefit of the scientific record), helps to prevent over-burden (and thus stretching the generosity of colleagues), and strengthens editorial boards (Setchell and Gordon, 2018). And in the face of peer-review, authors are also enormously generous. We all know that it can be difficult to receive comments on our work, yet throughout my time as co-Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editor of JHE, I have seen many, many letters from authors thanking reviewers for their work. These thanks are not given simply out of duty but because a lot of authors are genuinely grateful for the time others have spent looking at their work and seeking to improve it, even if the comments were initially hard to bear. Such generosity may not be a universal feature in academic publishing (Biesta, 2013) but I'm confident it will continue in our community.

Going back to my quick internet search, it was particularly interesting, but probably not surprising, that the topic of generosity was linked in multiple ways to the workings of modern academia. The marketization of higher education, 'publish or perish', metrics, and similar tropes may promote the very opposite of generosity (Bastian, 2016; Cadell and Wilder, 2018). In the increasingly stressful environment of higher education (Morrish, 2019; Morrish and Priaulx, 2020), it is remarkable that people still have the time—and headspace—to be generous. But there are multiple examples of generosity in our discipline. Fieldworkers leave homes and loved

ones, often for long periods of time, and can work in very difficult conditions to find the fossils or collect the behavioral data that many of us rely on for our research and teaching. On a recent trip to the Natural History Museum in London, the yellowing notes left in cabinets giving taxonomic revisions or additional clues about the provenance of specimens showed not only a commitment to rigor and accuracy but the generous desire to share knowledge. This is also the case when researchers share code, data, ideas, scholarship, advice, and resources. I have also been the beneficiary of much generosity during research trips and conferences: places to sleep, hospitality, help with collections, transport, and invitations to tea, drinks, or a meal when people see that you are on your own and might like some company. And after a particularly trying week of grappling with the editorial inbox, a friend left a mug in my pigeonhole with the slogan 'go away, I'm ~~writing~~ editing', which made me cheerful again.

I have no intention of being hagiographic about academia, and for each of the examples of generosity I list here, readers may think of contrary instances. Indeed, there are many troubling accounts of poor behavior in academia, and our discipline does not escape this. I sincerely hope that as we continue to grow and mature as a community, such instances die out. We also need to be careful of generosity: one can sometimes have (or give) too much of a good thing. Given what we know about the pressures of academia (Morrish, 2019; Morrish and Priaulx, 2020), it is important to have boundaries, and respect and encourage them in others. As an editor, it can be tempting, when the assignments are piling up and the times to decision stretching out, to go to 'the usual suspects', those who tend to say yes and produce careful, considered, and constructive reviews time after time. But this not only means that we're asking a great deal of those people, but also that we may not be giving others the chance to contribute. Oftentimes, generosity is seen as an individual trait, but in fact it's something that needs to be cultivated as a community (Bastian, 2016), which is consistent with evolutionary models (Stewart and Plotkin, 2013).

Last but certainly not least, I have left it to the end of this editorial to mention the generosity of the JHE publishing staff, as well as co-editors and associate editors. Publishers, journal

managers, copy editors, and production teams are vital to the success of a journal, and are often unacknowledged. There is a strong collaborative spirit at JHE, and people are very generous with their time and expertise. Associate editors tend to juggle large workloads and spend huge amounts of time digesting often tricky and contradictory reviewer reports to provide meaningful assessments on manuscripts. Past and present co-editors generously share wisdom, advice, and tips on using the editorial systems. As an editor, I made mistakes, learned a great deal, and my colleagues provided immense support and generosity of spirit, as well as the occasional recipe and funny gif. My over-arching view on JHE as it reaches its half-century is the generosity and support of the people involved in it, at all stages of the process, from authoring and submitting papers (and being understanding when it takes time to get reviews back), to producing—and reading—the finalized volume.

References

Aczel, B., Szaszi, B., Holcombe, A.O., 2021. A billion-dollar donation: Estimating the cost of researchers' time spent on peer review. Res. Integ. Peer Rev. 6, 14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-021-00118-2

Allen, S., 2018. The science of generosity. John Templeton Foundation Report. https://www.templeton.org/discoveries/science-of-generosity (accessed 1 July 2022).

Bastian, H., 2016. Research Nirvana: The generosity edition. https://absolutelymaybe.plos.org/2016/06/30/research-nirvana-the-generosity-edition/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

Biesta, G., 2014. Editorial: On academic generosity. Stud. Phil. Educ. 33, 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-013-9400-5

Caddell, M., Wilder, K., 2018. Seeking compassion in the measured university: Collegiality, generosity and competition in academic practice. J. Persp. App. Acad. Pract. 6, 14–23.

Desselle, S.P., Chen, A.M., Amin, M., Aslani, P., Dawoud, D., Miller, M.J., Norgaard, L.S., 2020. Generosity, collegiality, and scientific accuracy when writing and reviewing original research. Res. Soc. Admin. Pharm. 16, 261–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2019.04.054.

Kelly, J., Sadeghieh, T., Adeli, K., 2014. Peer review in scientific publications: Benefits, critiques, and a survival guide. J. Int. Fed. Clin. Chem. Lab. Med. 25,. 227–243.

Morrish, L., 2019. Pressure Vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff. Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) Occasional Paper 20, 1–74. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/05/23/pressure-vessels-the-epidemic-of-poor-mental-health-among-higher-education-staff/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

Morrish, L., Priaulx, N., 2020. Pressure Vessels II: An update on mental health among higher education staff in the UK. Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) Policy Note 23, 1–11. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/04/30/pressure-vessels-ii-an-update-on-mental-health-among-higher-education-staff-in-the-uk/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

Setchell, J.M., Gordon, A.D., 2018. Editorial: Editorial practice at the International Journal of Primatology: The roles of gender and country of affiliation in participation in scientific publication. Int. J. Primatol. 39**,** 969–986. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10764-018-0067-1

Spier, R., 2002. The history of the peer-review process. Trends Biotechnol. 20, 357–358. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-7799(02)01985-6.

Stewart, A.J., Plotkin, J.B., 2013. From extortion to generosity, evolution in the Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 110, 15348–15353. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1306246110.

Tomkins, A., Zhang, M., Heavlin, W.D., 2017. Reviewer bias in single- versus double-blind peer review. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 114, 12708–12713. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1707323114.

Sarah Elton
Department of Anthropology, Durham University, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, UK
E-mail address: sarah.elton@durham.ac.uk (S. Elton).