

Editorial: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*—A Key Journal to Foster the Quality of Research

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For many behavioral scientists, working in psychology and neighboring sciences, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (PPS) has attained the status of a favorite journal offering a forum for theoretical and methodological contemplation. PPS has become a journal that helps behavioral scientists define their identity and establish common ground for their discipline.

The development of PPS is an unequivocal success, and PPS's role in the scientific community is the result of a natural growth process that cannot be changed in an editorial. Thus, the present Editorial reports no plans for fundamental changes. The existing author and reviewer guidelines have been updated, but not dramatically. To express and accentuate the motives and strategies of PPS, however, we share some fundamental ideas with our readership and with potential authors, reviewers, or initiators of special issues, debates, and other intellectual activities published in PPS. We aim for maximal clarity about the journal's goals and transparency about its functions. Although we seek diverse functions for PPS—such as providing informed reviews of up-to-date research areas, methodological debates, theoretical and metatheoretical discussions, and even book reviews or contributions to public discourse—our most prominent and ambitious goal is to offer a forum to researchers to improve the quality of behavioral science.

Improving the Quality of Behavioral Science

Although there is no one way to achieve this ultimate goal of improved quality of behavioral science, we believe that some strategies cannot be wrong. We expect PPS to elevate scientific development through exchanges that illuminate and refine higher level theoretical underpinnings in a discipline that has been flourishing for decades at the empirical level. The most elaborate or compact research design is useless if the guiding theory is ill-defined, relying on vague constructs and unclear reasoning or not imposing testable constraints on empirical hypothesis tests. Likewise, with regard to the hierarchy of statistics, research design,

and logic of research, even the most sophisticated statistical methods are worth little if the research design is flawed. A second way we expect PPS to improve quality of behavioral science is for it to be a forum for behavioral scientists to gain a deeper understanding of methodology and logic of science. Scientists must go beyond mere formulaic uncritical compliance with formal guidelines and critically assess what they are doing, what their designs and data imply, and how their work contributes to higher level progress in science

Pluralism—Not Laissez Faire

This distinct hierarchy that places theory above research design, and research design above statistical analysis, is not set in stone for us. For us, the most important, superordinate principle of good science is pluralism and openness for upfront deliberation of viable viewpoints. If authors are convinced and motivated to explain that the hierarchy should be modified or turned upside down, they are welcome to outline good reasons why and under what conditions statistics can dominate research design, which in turn may be superordinate to strict theorizing. However, the intellectual and scientific style of PPS obliges authors to clearly articulate the reasons and the evidence for their stands. It is noteworthy that pluralism is not a synonym for leniency, laissez faire, or “anything goes.” Rather, pluralism entails a shared obligation to substantiate and explain all diverse viewpoints at the same high level of scrutiny, with the goal of fostering the quality of science.

However unfamiliar, unorthodox, or even awkward an empirical finding may appear, however close to or divergent from the mainstream a design or analysis may be, or whatever the majority or minority position is regarding a propagated hypothesis, scientific scrutiny obliges authors to adhere to standards for validity, precise terminology, logical coherence, and referentiality. The latter principle, referentiality, is crucial for cumulative science. No research takes place in a vacuum, detached from all previous research. Although nominal definitions are conventions that cannot be literally true

or false, they must take into account previously established scientific conventions. Scientists' use of statistical tests must not only be mathematically sound; one must also assess whether their explicit and implicit assumptions are met in the context of empirical projects in which they will be applied. Novel findings must be embedded in an up-to-date review of previous pertinent evidence. Any assessment of quality must consider not only whether research is valid but also whether it contributes novel insights to the current state of the art. This ambitious criterion is by no means confined to empirical articles; it also applies to review articles, theoretical treatises, or even to colloquial opinion pieces.

Winning Excellent Research for the Journal

Our commitment to scientific scrutiny is not meant to make PPS an overly demanding journal or to make successful publication elusive. On the contrary, there is strong agreement among the editorial team that false-negative editorial decisions (i.e., not winning truly substantial contributions for the journal) may constitute more costly and more irreversible errors than false positives (occasionally publishing imperfect or less-than-outstanding articles). This follows from the assumption that truly compelling contributions are precious and scarce, and the opportunity to learn about these rare preciousities is often forgone when false negatives go undetected. In contrast, false positives resulting from erroneous decisions to publish imperfect and less-compelling research are reversible, because they are published and therefore cannot go unnoticed.

The key to representing high research quality in a journal is not rejecting as many articles that do not exceed a superlative threshold as possible but instead accepting, and literally "winning," as many strong and compelling articles as possible. Missing a rare outstanding submission (or losing it to another journal) is a more serious failure experience for us than having to stick to a few not-so-fancy articles accepted for publication. When a submitted manuscript does not immediately appear to be a gem, a good peer-review process can help authors in their effort to reveal an article's full potential.

Demanding but Achievable: A Trade-Off

Recognizing the high costs of false negatives and making all attempts to exploit the value of "hidden gems" cannot, and should not, mean that PPS will employ a lenient publication policy, lowering the threshold for publishing any article. It is likely that many or most

articles do not deserve to be classified as hidden gems, and at PPS, we receive an excessive number of submissions each year. The boost in the journal's reputation has led to a marked increase in the number of submitted manuscripts, and we expect the rejection rate at PPS to remain similar to that in recent years. Still, the editorial team will make several serious attempts to reduce the typical frustrating rejection decisions.

For this reason, we intend to be as explicit and transparent as possible about the kind of contributions PPS seeks to attract and clarify that misguided submissions should be rather sent to another journal. Specifically, as listed in more detail in the Submission Guidelines on the journal website, PPS welcomes submissions of three classes of contributions:

- *Stand-alone articles*: Integrative reviews; delineation of theoretical innovations; ideas and fruitful research designs; scientific debates; methodological, philosophical, and historical perspectives; translational science; flash reports by outstanding young scientists; and documentations of diversity in psychological science.
- *Activist projects (i.e., those involving active collaborative or competitive action, beyond mere documentation)*: Special issues or special issue sections; special collections of independently submitted articles on a common theme; lead articles embedded in a pluralistic set of comments; adversarial collaborations, and multilab collaborations
- *Miscellaneous*: Biographies and autobiographies; timely and brief book reviews; and even humorous pieces of very high quality.

More relevant information can be found in the submission guidelines at <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/perspectives/pps-submissions>.

How to Reduce the Rate of Plain Rejections

Rejections can be avoided by not submitting a manuscript to PPS that does not fit the journal's profile. PPS is not an outlet for original empirical contributions, which ought to be submitted to various experimental journals in the cognitive and psychonomic fields, in developmental or differential psychology, or in other outlets for original articles. PPS is also not a journal for the publication of ordinary meta-analytic reviews that merely aggregate over many experimental studies. A notable exception would be strictly theory-driven and theory-generating meta-analyses that give rise to novel theoretical insights rather than mere post hoc interpretations of meta-analytic

patterns that result from empirical aggregation, devoid of any a priori constraints.

Forum for Diverse and Activist Research

PPS is open for spontaneous submissions as well as for invited contributions—for good reasons. Invitations to contribute are by no means justified by personal connections, by authors' seniority, or by the privileged status of authorities. Rather, invitations are motivated by two types of preliminary negotiation processes. On one hand, because PPS is supposed to foster diversity of science, deliberate invitations can be used as an instrument to increase diversity of various kinds: outstanding junior researchers and the wisdom of elder scholars; cultural diversity of psychological science taking place in different nations, geographical, or vocational environments; gender or group perspectives; interfaces between psychology and neighboring disciplines; and the mapping of basic on translational and applied science.

On the other hand, to unfold its full innovative and inspiring power, PPS must be open for activist contributions that do not fit the traditional journal-article template. These activist contributions include special issues, special sections, or article collections convened by invited guest editors; adversarial collaborations; reports on diverse forms of multilab collaborations; and metascientific reviews or debates. Such activist contributions, typically delegated to guest editors, can determine the contents of an entire journal issue or a substantive part of it.

Invitations to such activities must be based on a proposal. Thus, authors are encouraged to describe in a short, format-free proposal their conception for a special issue or for any other activist publication format. Successful proposals will then be supported by an editorial invitation letter.

Focus on Best Exemplars Rather Than on Bad Practices

Finally, the editorial team would like to highlight one overarching principle for the future success of PPS, both as an end in and of itself but also as an effective means of fostering the quality of science. We believe that focusing on felicitous pieces of outstanding research of which the field can be proud and that deserve to be imitated and refined offers more learning and scientific growth than focusing on poor practices of misbegotten science. Thus, elaborating on the best exemplars of psychological science is a more prominent and constructive goal for a leading journal like PPS than expressing complaints and lamenting negative examples. We expect this strategy to be more successful in the long run, although the future will have to confirm this expectation.

Klaus Fiedler
Mirta Galesic
Leonel Garcia-Marques
Aparna Labroo
Tina M. Lowrey
Richard D. Morey
Timothy J. Pleskac

Transparency

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ORCID iDs

Klaus Fiedler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3475-0868>

Richard D. Morey  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9220-3179>