

The changing face of psychology

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The Guardian:

In 1959, an American researcher named Ted Sterling reported something disturbing. Of 294 articles published across four major psychology journals, 286 had reported positive results – that is, a staggering 97% of published papers were underpinned by statistically significant effects. Where, he wondered, were all the negative results – the less exciting or less conclusive findings? Sterling labelled this publication bias a form of malpractice. After all, getting published in science should never depend on getting the “right results”.

You might think that Sterling’s discovery would have led the psychologists of 1959 to sit up and take notice. Groups would be assembled to combat the problem, ensuring that the scientific record reflected a balanced sum of the evidence. Journal policies would be changed, incentives realigned.

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How it’s changing: The new generation of psychologists understands that independent replication is crucial for real advancement and to earn wider credibility in science. A beautiful example of this drive is the Many Labs project led by Brian Nosek from the University of Virginia. Nosek and a team of 50 colleagues located in 36 labs worldwide sought to replicate 13 key findings in psychology, across a sample of 6,344 participants. Ten of the effects replicated successfully.

Journals are also beginning to respect the importance of replication. The prominent outlet *Perspectives on Psychological Science* recently launched an initiative that specifically publishes direct replications of previous studies. Meanwhile, journals such as BMC Psychology and PLOS ONE officially disown the requirement for researchers to report novel, positive findings.

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These behaviours are common in psychology – a recent survey led by Leslie John from Harvard University estimated that at least 60% of psychologists selectively report analyses that “work”. In many cases such behaviour may even be unconscious.

Read the whole story: [*The Guardian*](#).

See Brian Nosek at the [26th APS Annual Convention](#).