

What's New at Perspectives

January 11, 2011

We're starting off the year with a guest column from Bobbie Spellman, incoming Editor of Perspectives on Psychological Science. She describes a number of innovations being launched under the auspices of the journal that will encourage stronger connections among our field's diverse research interests and will help ensure that psychological science continues to be a collaborative, self-correcting enterprise. With her January line-up Spellman has hit the ground running; her energy and vision are inspiring. Perspectives, which is in its first year in ISI rankings is 4th in impact factor, is in good hands.

-Mahzarin R. Banaji
APS President



Bobbie Spellman

"I want *Perspectives on Psychological Science* to help change the way we communicate Psychology research," I wrote when I agreed to be the Editor of *Perspectives*. "I think we CAN change the way we communicate Psychology research," I thought after seeing *The Social Network*. "I think we can change the way we communicate Psychology research NOW," I exclaimed after reading APS President Mahzarin Banaji's Presidential column last month on the APS Wikipedia Initiative.

I think that not only can we change how we communicate to the rest of the world, but we can also change the way we communicate to each other to improve our **science**. Our shared knowledge grows when someone publishes an article, but then it seems like it takes years before others can incorporate it and respond to it in another published article. With the move to “short empirical articles,” we publish in more pieces. With the growth in topics within psychology and the multiplying of sub-disciplines, we publish in more places. I think that as a **science** we can become better by becoming more collaborative and comprehensive more quickly, and I think we can do a better job of being self-correcting more quickly. I think we can use both print and electronic formats to do these important things.

So, what’s happening at *Perspectives*? For one, we are moving from a majority of invited manuscripts to a majority of unsolicited manuscripts. With those manuscripts we want to continue to do well what we have been doing well — publishing high-quality review and theory articles plus topical “special sections.” However, we are also making style changes: we are trying out some **new** formats to foster more conversation within and across our subdisciplines.

More open discussion. This month, we are trying an open call for peer commentary on a target article somewhat in the style of *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. The **January** issue has a featured paper by clinical scientist Alan Kazdin (and co-author Stacey Blase) based on Kazdin’s provocative James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award Address at last year’s APS meeting in Boston. If you are interested in commenting on that paper, you can submit a 200-word abstract to the **new Perspectives** portal by February 14: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pps>

Associate Editor Bethany Teachman and Consulting Editor Teresa Treat will read the abstracts and invite a few authors to write full comments. These will be published together in a subsequent issue with a reply by the authors. Criteria for selection include likely influence of the comment/critique, interest to a broad readership, and importance of the issues raised. Also, the Editors will select a set of proposals that offer a diversity of viewpoints, rather than multiple examples of a single perspective. For those proposals that are not selected for publication, the authors will have an opportunity to post the abstract or full comment at the *Perspectives* discussion forum (coming soon to a website near you).

More expert discussion. Among the projects in the pipeline that we are very excited about is a “forum” in which six leading researchers discuss what can be concluded from the research on mirror neurons. Consulting Editor Art Glenberg is organizing the contributions; the researchers each have the opportunity to present their arguments and then to respond to each other. This cutting-edge conversation should appear in mid-**2011**. Proposals for similar treatments of broadly interesting and controversial topics are welcome.

More papers that create connections. Several people are working on articles of the style I suggested last year: “*A Tale of Two Literatures*.” These are articles that reveal ties across two or more subdisciplines of Psychology that work on similar issues but don’t seem to connect to each other. I would also like to see articles that one might call: “*Old Wine in New Bottles*”. These would be short articles suggesting that something that seems newly discovered is much like something we’ve known for a while.

Advice from our elders. Also in the pipeline are a few articles by senior researchers who are near or at retirement. The “*Three Things*” series lets them reflect on three things that they have learned and that

they don't want us to forget.

Cleaning the file drawers. As I have said elsewhere, I think we all believe, as scientists, that it is important for Psychology to be self-correcting. There are few things that I find more disappointing than when an enthusiastic graduate student comes to me with a great idea that extends someone else's research but then can't even replicate the basic finding. At *Perspectives*, we are working on ways to address the "file drawer" problem. We are developing a protocol for how to best consider and write about these difficult-to-replicate findings. What we envisioned is something like this: First, the Editorial Board identifies phenomena that researchers have had trouble replicating. We learn from the original researchers about why those failures are likely to have occurred. Then we find lead researchers who will collect the unpublished replications — both failures and successes — and do a meta-analysis. Finally, the original researchers would be given a chance to respond. Ultimately, though, I am hoping to create a wiki where we, as a field, can note our difficulties in replicating various studies and our discoveries of limiting conditions. (On evil days I want to create prediction markets for whether some experiments are likely to be replicable.) When we find phenomena that are fickle, we can commission meta-analyses and call for the file drawers to be emptied. That would make us self-correcting faster.

The January Issue

The **January** issue of *Perspectives* is the first to contain papers accepted under my editorship. At a recent (lunch) meeting, Bethany and I realized that this issue is loosely structured like a meal. Our first few papers represent a **new** type of paper for *Perspectives* – what we call "Small Bites". These papers are short in length but long in flavor, containing information or ideas that may affect how you do research or how you think about the world. The entrée section begins with the featured paper by Kazdin and Blase described above. Our other entrées represent a variety of tasty and nutritious areas across **psychological science**. The final paper is a real treat – or, should I say, "tweet"? It has kept me laughing — and learning — since Reggie X. Kierkegaard submitted it almost a year ago. If you're not up on Cognitive Dissonance (and who is any more?), the Secret Decoder Ring supplement will help you understand and enjoy the messages.

And so, with my first issue I'd like to give Ed Diener, the founding editor of *Perspectives*, a toast of thanks, and wish everyone else: Bon appétit.