

Editorial: Into the Second Century

“A large number of patients have impulses to perform certain useless, bizarre, and even dangerous acts” (Janet, 1906, p. 1). This is the opening sentence in “On the Pathogenesis of Some Impulsions,” an article written by the celebrated French psychiatrist Pierre Janet. These also are the first words ever published in the long and celebrated history of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. Janet’s article was among four pieces published in the inaugural April 1906 issue of the journal, which also included a paper by James J. Putnam on the use of Freudian psychoanalysis to treat hysteria, an article on the nature of hypnosis by W. v. Bechterew, and an article by the journal’s founding editor, Morton Prince, on sudden religious conversion.

The First Century

With the publication of Volume 114 in 2005, the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* completed its first century of operation. Before I speculate on where its second century might take us, it seems appropriate to pause briefly and reflect on its proud history (for other accounts, see Allport, 1938; Buchwald, 1981; Katz, 1964). In the early decades of its existence, *Abnormal* clearly was quite different from the typical psychological journal of today. The articles in its inaugural issue reflect the fact that its early content was heavily influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis and other forms of dynamic psychology. Thus, it was not uncommon to see articles on such topics as the nature and interpretation of dreams, parapraxes, transference, hysteria, repression, and the unconscious. The nature of these early years perhaps is best captured by Morton Prince’s initial statement (reprinted in Allport, 1938) regarding the intended scope of the journal:

The field of investigation includes, for instance, such subjects as hysteria, hallucinations, delusions, amnesias, abulias, aphasias, fixed ideas, obsessions, deliria, perversions, emotions and their influence, exaltations, depressions, habit neuroses and psychoses, phenomena of hypnosis, sleep, dreams, automatisms, alterations of personality, multiple personality, dissociation of consciousness, subconscious phenomena, relation of the mind to physiological processes, neurasthenic and psychasthenic states. (p. 4)

In its early years, *Abnormal* was quite inclusive and published a broader range of material—in terms of both content and format—than it has more recently. During its first three decades, for instance, it published articles on crystal gazing, demonic possession, and the psychology of hymns (many of which were found to contain unrequited infantile wishes) and two papers on Lady, the “mind-reading” horse. It published psychological analyses of Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*, Louis Bonaparte, Socrates, and the poetry of Shelley. In light of the psychoanalytic temper of these times, it is not surprising that *Abnormal* contained a wide variety of sex-related pieces, including articles on erotic dreams, the sex impulse in Christian mysticism, sex in tantras, the sexual nature of religious ecstasy, the effects of involuntary sterilization on sexual activity and satisfaction, and double entendres in the lyrics of American blues songs. In addition to standard case studies, the journal

printed a number of autobiographical pieces (see, e.g., “My Life as a Dissociated Personality”; B.C.A., 1908), culminating in an anonymous poem, “We Drunkards,” published in 1935. Finally, it is interesting to note that in a 1925 editorial, *Abnormal* offered a \$5,000 prize “to any person claiming to produce supernormal material phenomena who will be the first to demonstrate the actuality of the same under rigid laboratory conditions and by recognized scientific methods” (Prince & Moore, 1925, p. 1). It was reported the following year that no one had attempted to claim the prize, which led the Editors to conclude, “It seems to indicate . . . that no reputable medium has confidence in his or her supernormal powers and that general disbelief in such powers is justified” (Prince & Moore, 1926, p. 343).

Throughout its distinguished history, *Abnormal* has published pieces by many of the most prominent names in psychology and psychiatry. During its first 25 years, for example, it included contributions by such figures as Alfred Adler, Floyd and Gordon Allport (both of whom served as Editors), A. A. Brill, Havelock Ellis, J. P. Guilford, G. Stanley Hall, Clark Hull, Pierre Janet, Ernest Jones, Carl Gustav Jung, Otto Klineberg, Karl Menninger, Adolph Meyer, Hugo Munsterberg, Lewis Terman, Louis Leon Thurstone, David Wechsler, William Alanson White, Robert S. Woodworth—and, of course, several pieces by Morton Prince himself.

The first major shift in the journal’s course occurred in 1921, when its scope was broadened to include social and personality research. This substantial change was acknowledged in its new title, the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology and Social Psychology* (which was mercifully shortened to the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* in 1925). Over the next 44 years, this expanded journal published the finest research in psychopathology, personality, and social psychology in a single integrated outlet. As someone who was trained as a personality psychologist, I am especially proud of the fact that *Abnormal* has published several of the most important papers in the history of this field. To take one example, under the editorship of Gordon Allport (himself a seminal figure in the history of personality theory and research), the journal published key articles in the development of the prominent five-factor, or “Big Five,” model of personality, including a 1943 article by Raymond B. Cattell and a 1949 paper by Donald W. Fiske. It also subsequently published a classic 1963 piece by Warren Norman (for a brief account of the history of the Big Five and the pivotal roles played by these *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* articles, see Goldberg, 1993).

For a variety of reasons, this union of social, personality, and clinical psychology ended in 1965, when the content subsumed by the old, expanded *Abnormal* was resplit into two separate outlets: Articles on personality and social processes were redirected to the newly created *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, whereas psychopathology research was retained for the rechristened *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. Thus began the most recent, modern era of the journal, during which it has concentrated

primarily on publishing the best research and theory in the “broad field of abnormal behavior, its determinants, and its correlates.”

The Second Century

Changes in Author Guidelines

Whenever there is a change in regime, authors naturally are interested in knowing about significant shifts in editorial policy. What changes are planned as we move the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* into its second century? I begin by echoing the sentiments of one of my predecessors, Gordon Allport, who wrote in 1938, “It is fortunate that no editor newly selected to take up the responsibility for an older established journal feels free to experiment rashly with its pages” (p. 3). *Abnormal* has been extremely well-managed in recent years, and it has maintained its status as the top-tier outlet for basic psychopathology research. Accordingly, I see no need to institute any fundamental changes in its scope or content.

Authors will note, however, that I have modified the journal’s guidelines for submitted manuscripts in other ways. In particular, I have changed the specifications regarding length. The old guidelines were stated largely in terms of manuscript pages. Unfortunately, this was a moving target, as authors experimented with different fonts, margins, and line spacings in an effort to cram ever more material into a single manuscript page. I therefore have streamlined things by stating the new length guidelines in terms of the overall number of words, rather than the number of manuscript pages. I hope that this change will encourage authors to abandon formatting experimentation and to follow more closely the stylistic guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) in preparing their manuscripts (see APA, 2001). At the same time, this new focus on the overall number of words should help authors to be sensitive to the true—rather than the apparent—length of their submissions. In this regard, the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* long has favored relatively brief articles that present material in a clear and concise manner; this policy will continue in the future. Although *Abnormal* publishes manuscripts ranging from brief reports to extended articles, we still guard our journal pages very carefully and monitor the length of submitted manuscripts. All other things being equal, shorter is better, because it enables us to publish the greatest number of articles while maintaining an acceptable publication lag. Put differently, the length of a manuscript should be no greater than the magnitude of its contribution to the field. As Allport (1938) put it, an article “may be long or it may be short—though never longer than is necessary to establish the point in question” (p. 12).

Scope of Content and Boundary Issues

Our editorial office periodically receives inquiries from authors regarding the appropriateness of different types of manuscripts for consideration in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. It therefore is helpful to discuss the scope of the content contained in *Abnormal*, as well as boundary areas of potential overlap with other APA publications. Traditionally, a major issue concerns the boundary between *Abnormal* and the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, and it is clear that this remains a point of confusion for many authors. I encourage authors to examine carefully our journal

description, which is reprinted on the inside cover of each issue and which is also available on the journal’s Web page. This description clarifies that *Abnormal* does not consider articles that focus on the *treatment* of abnormal behavior, so that “a study that focuses primarily on treatment efficacy should be submitted to the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.” This policy also applies to manuscripts that focus primarily on predictors of treatment efficacy. Inevitably, however, there will be some gray areas within this boundary region. In such cases, before formally submitting their manuscripts for publication, authors are welcome to contact the editors of the respective journals to obtain feedback about the appropriateness of their manuscripts.

The articles published in *Abnormal* often contain a wide range of psychometric instruments, including self-reports, clinicians’ ratings, structured and semistructured interviews, and behavioral measures. I must emphasize, however, that our focus is on the target constructs assessed by these instruments (e.g., depression, psychopathy, posttraumatic stress disorder, bulimia nervosa), rather than on the instruments themselves. Thus, we ordinarily do not consider manuscripts that focus primarily on the development and validation of clinical measures, unless these papers help to enhance our understanding of the underlying constructs in a highly significant way. In most cases, manuscripts that primarily are concerned with the development and validation of clinical measures should be directed toward an assessment-oriented journal, such as *Psychological Assessment*.

Over the years, *Abnormal* has published a large number of studies examining relations between personality traits and clinical syndromes; interest in this topic was particularly stimulated by the publication of a Special Issue on Personality and Psychopathology in the February 1994 issue of the journal (Watson & Clark, 1994). We continue to welcome strong and innovative studies in this area. I must clarify, however, that although we publish articles that clarify links between traits and psychopathology (e.g., studies that examine how neuroticism is related to the mood and anxiety disorders), *Abnormal* is not an appropriate venue for papers that primarily focus on the traits themselves (e.g., manuscripts that explore the nature of neuroticism). These types of manuscripts should be directed toward a personality-oriented outlet, such as the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

We recently have received a number of submissions that report the results of quantitative meta-analyses, as well as inquiries from authors about whether or not these types of manuscripts are appropriate for publication in *Abnormal*. In responding to these inquiries, I have clarified that we are willing to evaluate the merits of these manuscripts, assuming that the focus of the meta-analysis falls within the basic purview of the journal. I should add, however, that we are primarily interested in manuscripts that advance our understanding of a specific issue that is directly pertinent to abnormal behavior. It is our expectation, moreover, that manuscripts reporting a specific meta-analysis generally will fall within the length restrictions of a regular article, rather than an extended article. Long, complex meta-analyses that address broader issues ordinarily should be directed to a more general journal, such as *Psychological Bulletin*.

Another boundary issue concerns taxometric analyses, which examine whether the nature of the underlying psychopathological construct is categorical (i.e., taxonic) or dimensional in nature. During the past decade, taxometric analyses of psychopathological

constructs have been published in a number of APA journals, including *Psychological Methods* (pathological dissociation), *Psychological Assessment* (depression), the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* (psychopathy), and the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (eating disorders). *Abnormal* has published a large number of taxometric articles in recent years—including analyses of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, schizotypy, borderline personality disorder, bulimia nervosa, and dissociation—and we will continue to consider theoretically interesting manuscripts that explicate the nature of basic psychopathological constructs. Consistent with policy considerations outlined earlier, taxometric analyses of (a) specific psychometric instruments and (b) basic personality constructs should be submitted elsewhere. I should add, moreover, that simply testing whether or not a given construct is taxonic is not necessarily “theoretically interesting” (see Cole, 2004; Lenzenweger, 2004). Thus, we are particularly interested in manuscripts that go beyond a mere examination of whether or not a construct is taxonic and either (a) explicate the construct validity of the taxon [if one has been identified] or (b) directly compare the heuristic value and predictive power of categorical versus dimensional conceptualizations of the construct.

Methodological and Design Issues

Next, I briefly review some basic methodological and design issues that may be helpful to authors who are considering submitting their manuscripts to the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. One recurring question is whether the journal is willing to publish results based on nonclinical, analog samples, such as college students (who represent a sample of great convenience for many researchers). *Abnormal* has a long tradition of publishing results based on analog samples, and we will continue to consider studies based on nonclinical samples during my editorship. I am a firm believer in the value of analog research, and I acknowledge that the use of analog samples offers certain advantages (e.g., it can bypass sample size problems that often plague research based on clinical samples). Nevertheless, the fact remains that we must make the publication threshold relatively high for analog studies, if for no other reason than that it is so much easier to collect data from college students than from clinical samples. In other words, all other things being equal, we are much more likely to publish a study based on a clinical sample than on a nonclinical sample. Put differently, we reward researchers who have collected data that are more difficult to obtain. Note that this same basic principle also applies to other design considerations: Multisource data are more interesting to us than monomethod data, and longitudinal designs are valued more than cross-sectional designs.

Another key issue is sample size. As just noted, I recognize that many researchers are collecting data from populations in which it is difficult to obtain large samples. Even so, many of the manuscripts submitted to *Abnormal* report findings based on sample sizes that are far too small to yield meaningful results and conclusions given the questions addressed and the data-analytic methods used. Even if they are otherwise interesting, these manuscripts inevitably will be rejected. I therefore encourage researchers to consider this issue very carefully when designing their studies and when preparing their manuscripts for submission. For help in deciding appropriate sample sizes, I refer readers to both classic (Cohen, 1988) and more recent discussions related to multiple

regression (Kelley & Maxwell, 2003; Maxwell, 2000) and factor analysis (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999).

I also urge authors to examine carefully—and report fully—the reliability of their measures. Many submitted manuscripts fail to report any reliability data at all. Others contain vague and unhelpful statements, such as “All of the scales showed adequate reliabilities” or “All of the kappas were above .75.” It is much more informative to report specific reliability values (e.g., coefficient alpha, kappa) for all appropriate measures. This information is important for two reasons. First, it helps readers, reviewers, and editors evaluate the reliability and construct validity of these measures. Second, reliability data have important archival value in their own right (e.g., in the computation of appropriate effect sizes in meta-analyses).

Editorial Agenda

Finally, many authors are interested in knowing whether a new editorial regime has any particular agenda or vision for the future. I have two interrelated goals for my editorship. First, according to current projections, the revision process for the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*—which will culminate in the publication of its fifth edition (*DSM-V*) sometime around 2011—is scheduled to begin in 2007 (for more information, go to <http://dsm5.org/>). I believe that the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*—which has a long tradition of publishing the very best psychopathology research—can and should play a pivotal role in shaping this revision of the *DSM*. We therefore are very interested in receiving manuscripts that identify significant problems in the current taxonomy and suggest specific ways of improving it. To further this goal, we anticipate publishing some relevant special sections in the journal over the next few years.

Second, in its early years, *Abnormal* clearly crossed disciplinary boundaries and published a large number of contributions from both psychologists and psychiatrists. Indeed, Morton Prince himself was a physician and neurologist. Although *Abnormal* has remained an essential resource for psychologists who conduct psychopathology research, it currently has somewhat less visibility in the psychiatric community. Accordingly, another goal of my editorship is to reverse this trend and to increase the level of interest and participation in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* by the psychiatric and greater mental health community. I believe a renewed interdisciplinary focus is desirable for many reasons—among other things, it surely will help further the goal of producing a better, more informative taxonomy in the upcoming *DSM-V*.—David Watson, Editor

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