

'Patients' and 'Clients'

In the wake of Roddy Roediger's interesting discussion of the usage of "subjects" vs. "participants" in research reports, Christine Senn raised the question of referring to patients or "clients" ["Have 'Patients,' " October 2004 *Observer*]. Because no one else has weighed in on this matter, I thought I might give it a try.

In research reports, the term *patients* can be justified as referring to those subjects who participate in experiments by virtue of the fact that they carry some medical (including psychiatric) diagnosis (such as schizophrenia or Alzheimer's disease), and whose performance is typically compared to a control group of ostensibly "normal" subjects who are not carrying a diagnosis. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that this use of the word to refer to those who are receiving medical treatment goes back to Chaucer, and it seems perfectly appropriate to preserve it. However,

some practitioners think that the term "patient" implies an unacceptable level of passivity, and have proposed the term "client" instead — a usage that the *OED* traces to the social work literature of the 1950s. Given the primary meaning of the word "client," referring to one who is dependent on the protection or patronage of another, it's not clear that this is a good alternative.

In pragmatic terms of social role, though, it might be said that patients do what their doctors prescribe in order to get well; but lawyers and architects are paid to follow the instructions of their clients. So, in clinical or counseling situations, the choice between "patients" and "clients" might boil down to who is in the better position to know what the problem is, and how it should be treated — the person providing the service, or the one receiving it.

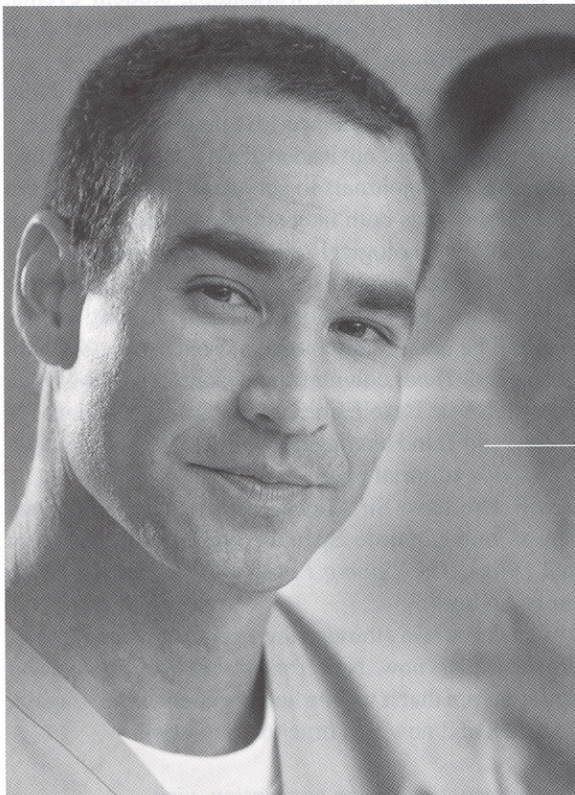
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Footnotes and Rejections

As something of a veteran of footnotes and rejection letters, I have two personal items to offer as confirmations of some of the theses offered by Roddy Roediger ["The Greatest Literature Never Published," June 2005 *Observer*].

The first item is what I believe to be the longest footnote ever published by the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* in a 1971 short-report paper (91, 161-4) by Karl Schiffman and me entitled "Test of the propriety of the traditional discriminative control procedure in Pavlovian electrodermal and plethysmographic conditioning" (I guess the title is pretty long too). The footnote dealt with methodological *caveats* expressed by an anonymous reviewer and by a colleague, Leyla De Toledo, at Toronto. The footnote is over 50 lines long, and, as I recall, we succeeded in persuading the editor, the late David Grant, to allow it in by submitting the first half



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