

**The APS Manual Debate, Continued**

Letters addressing Roddy Roediger's April 2004 Presidential Column "What Should They Be Called?"

I STRONGLY RESONATED with Roddy Roediger's comments about the fate of the term "subjects" in the APA Publication Manual. It's not just Art Melton, editor of the classic 1972 edition of the Manual, who must be turning over in his grave; the ghost of Joseph Jastrow, who invented "APA style" in the first place, must also be deeply troubled by this and related turns of events.

Aside from Roediger's legitimate questions about the provenance of this decision — precisely who made it, and precisely why — the rule blithely ignores the simple fact that there are many "participants" in psychological experiments, each with his or her own special role.

There are the subjects who provide the data, and the experimenters who collect it (in psychophysics, the subjects were sometimes referred to as "observers" instead); there are the confederates (Schachter and Singer called them "stooges") who help create and maintain deception; there are laboratory technicians who operate special equipment, and perhaps other research assistants as well, who have active contact with the subject, the experimenter, or both during the social interaction known as "taking part in an experiment".

But only one participant provides the data: the subject, and that's what "they" should be called — whether they are human or nonhuman.

I am glad that Roddy got a dispensation from using the abominable term "participant" in his publications in APA journals. Some of us who do hypnosis research have also received this dispensation over the years, because "subject" is a technical term in hypnosis research (referring to the person who responds to the hypnotist's suggestions). But whatever our topic, perhaps we should all start asking for a similar dispensation, more often.

As for whether some organization, like the APS, should publish a rival publication manual, I think not. The APA publication, for all its faults, has become a standard resource, like *The Chicago Manual of Style*. But surely other organizations that publish scientific

journals, like APS and the Psychonomic Society, can actively encourage, or at least permit, their authors to use the word "subjects" as appropriate. I note that *Psychological Science* only requires that authors conform to the 5th edition with respect to references, footnotes, and the like. Presumably everything else in the Publication Manual can, and should, be taken with a grain of salt.

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