

Special Issues

Theory & Psychology routinely publishes special issues on a range of contents that are edited by Guest Editors. We welcome suggestions for special issues and have made it a priority to work with guest editors from a broad range of theoretical positions.

Most special issues are proposed to the editors. Occasionally, we will solicit a special issue on some topic we feel ought to be covered in our pages. It has happened that a special issue has been put together simply by combining regularly submitted papers to the journal (e.g., see *Social Constructionism and its critics*, [Vol. 11, no. 3, June, 2001](#)) but this is rare. There are a number of important steps you must follow in putting together a special issue.

Please note that these instructions also apply to Special Sections of an issue. Special sections are published when there are insufficient papers to fill an entire journal issue but three to five sufficiently similar papers on a topic that have been guest edited that can fill most of a single issue of the journal. (See for example, the special section, *A Symposium on Explanatory Pluralism*, in [Vol. 11, no. 6, December, 2001](#)).

1. The Proposal:

As the Guest Editor(s), it is important to have a sound proposal and a list of potential contributors in the first instance (unless you are going to put out a general call for papers for the issue in which case you need to discuss this with the editor). The proposal (usually no more than about four pages) should include a description of the area and its relevance to the journal and some description of the potential participants. Remember that a special issue should be on a topic neither too specialized nor too broad. A special issue, for example, on the topic of “hermeneutics” would be too broad. An issue on recent developments of a single theory or viewpoint may be too narrow. In addition, a special issue is normally devoted to a topic that has generated recent interest in psychology or in interdisciplinary domains. Please review previous special issues before embarking on a proposal (e.g., *The Dialogical Self as a Society of Mind*, [Vol. 12, no. 2, April, 2002](#)).

The journal editor obtains feedback from Advisory and Associate Editors and any members of the Editorial Board whose expertise is relevant to the topic. They may or may not have any suggestions to make and this may lead to a request to revise the proposal or it may lead to acceptance with suggestions for changes or inclusion of certain authors. Sometimes we accept suggestions for special issues outright. Once you have approval you should contact your participants and set an appropriate deadline for their submissions.

At the time your proposal is approved, the editor will determine a potential publication date with you. Please adhere as much as possible to this date. At any given time, there are two or three special issues in the making and it is very important to keep to publication schedules since we do not wish to publish special

issues closely together. It also helps if we can announce the publication of a special issue in advance.

2. The Review Process:

Save for commentaries and book reviews, *Theory & Psychology* rarely if ever publishes anything that is not peer reviewed. Hence all submissions for special issues are also reviewed. As guest editor of the special issue, that will be your task but we can assist you. Normally you will obtain two reviews per paper, but for some, very good, specialty papers one review may suffice. The review process will lead to suggestions for revision which you will pass along to your authors and you will guide them through the process of revising their papers. When you have final versions of papers in to you then you will send (a) the final version along with (b) the reviews of the original manuscript to *Theory & Psychology* for final processing.

Note that the review process is important: if you are editing a special issue on a topic that is a specialty of yours it is likely that you will personally know many of the contributors to the issue. The requirement to review papers makes it easier to ask authors to make revisions; reviewers often give you the leverage you need to push reluctant authors to make needed changes.

You will want to write an integrative introduction to the special issue and this can be relatively brief or almost a full-length article introduction, depending on your predilection, topics, authors, and so on. This is the one part of a special issue that does not need to be reviewed by external reviewers.

3. The Duration:

The process of submitting a proposal, contacting authors, waiting for papers, sending them for review, and obtaining revisions can be done rapidly in a matter of months (if there is a great deal of pre-planning) or it can take several years. Normally authors need about six months from the time you ask them until such time as you can expect them to submit their papers. Remember that it will often take longer than contributors originally estimate to produce papers so it is good to have a realistic plan for submission dates. Sometimes authors drop out, at which point you may need to have one or more back-up authors in place. When you ask your authors to participate please make it absolutely clear that *Theory & Psychology* only publishes original material—no reprints of papers or material published elsewhere will be considered.

4. The Length of an Issue:

The most common question concerning special issues is, “how many papers can be published?” That depends in part on their length, of course. Normally, *Theory & Psychology* publishes up to 7 or 8 papers in an issue if there are no book reviews. But these papers can't be overly long, that is, they all have to remain within a limit of about 6,000-8,000 words. Remember to leave room for your introduction. That means 6 papers or 7 if a couple are relatively short. Most guest editors of special issues do not attempt to obtain book reviews. However, if you feel you would like to

include one or more reviews of books that you feel ought to be included then please contact us with the details of books, reviewers, format, and so on.

5. The Style:

Information about *Theory & Psychology's* style is available on [these web pages](#), but it helps if you give authors advance warning, especially if they are not conversant with APA style. Please note that failure to adhere to journal style can lead to delays in the production of the special issue.

Along the way, the editor will remain in touch with guest editors to answer questions, offer advice, and monitor progress.