

# Call for Papers

## “Theory Specification and Theory Building in Psychology”

A Topical Issue of the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*

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### Focus of the Topical Issue, Aims, and Scope

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One of the pressing challenges in the field of psychology is the lack of specification of theories. This issue manifests in several ways, including insufficient clarification of the generality of theories (i.e. the conditions under which they apply), vague definitions of constructs and overlapping constructs, unclear relationships between constructs and data, and an overall lack of clarity in the propositions that constitute a theory. This underspecification of theories contributes to problems like replication failures, the persistence of redundant theories, and hinders the cumulative development of knowledge in psychology.

The issue of underspecified theories, the underlying reasons, their consequences, and potential solutions have garnered significant attention in recent years (e.g., Frankenhuys et al., in press; Gigerenzer, 2017; Klein, 2014; Maier et al., 2023; Muthukrishna & Henrich, 2019; Oberauer & Lewandowsky, 2019; Reizenstein, 2022; Smaldino, 2019; Trafimow & Earp, 2016; for earlier approaches, see also Haig, 2008; Meehl, 1990a, 1990b; Popper, 1935/2002; Westmeyer, 1989). The academic discourse on this topic has proposed various approaches to enhance theory specification. Notable contributions come from Borsboom et al. (2021), Glöckner and Betsch (2011), Gray (2017), Hale et al. (2020), Leising et al. (2023), van Rooij and Baggio (2021), and van Rooij and Blokpoel (2020). Some scholars furthermore emphasize the necessity of improving the link between theory and data, suggesting better methods for theory testing (e.g., Almaatouq et al., 2022; Oberauer & Lewandowsky, 2019). A comprehensive 10-step approach has been proposed, which adds fostering consensus building (Leising et al., 2022b; see also Oreskes,

2019), as well as challenging existing consensus (Leising et al., 2022a) as important additional aspects to solve some problems of theory underspecification.

Other researchers have highlighted the complexity of psychological phenomena as a challenge for theory specification (Sanbonmatsu & Johnston, 2019) or argued that, in certain domains, establishing a sufficient number of robust phenomena is a prerequisite for successful theory specification (Eronen & Bringmann, 2021).

In this special issue, our aim is to promote further developments in theory specification and the theory-building debate by providing a platform to showcase recent advancements, compare and integrate different approaches, and provide exemplary applications of theory specification. We invite contributions from all psychological disciplines that delve into the processes, methods, challenges, and advancements in theory specification and theory building. We welcome original research articles, methodological articles, and comprehensive reviews.

Topics covered may include, but are not limited to:

- Methods, techniques, and best practices in theory specification and development
- Critical analyses of existing theoretical frameworks and the identification of gaps through the specification of current theories
- The role of theory in guiding empirical research and its implications
- Interdisciplinary approaches in theory building and their contributions to psychology
- The implications of underspecified theories and the challenges they present
- The historical trajectory and evolution of major psychological theories

- Future directions and the “next frontiers” in psychological theory
- The potential of integrating emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and data sciences in theory building processes

Through this topical issue, we aim to stimulate academic discourse, foster advancements in theory specification methodology, and contribute to specific theories. Our goal is to ignite further discussions on the pivotal role of well-specified theories in advancing our understanding of psychological processes.

## How to Submit

There is a two-stage submission process. Initially, interested authors are requested to submit extended abstracts of their proposed papers. Authors of the selected abstracts will then be invited to submit full papers. All papers will undergo blind peer review.

### Stage 1: Structured Abstract Submission

Authors interested in this special issue must submit a structured abstract of the planned manuscript before submitting a full paper. The goal is to provide authors with prompt feedback regarding the suitability and relevance of the planned manuscript to the special issue.

**The deadline for submitting structured abstracts is April 15, 2024.**

Feedback on whether or not the editors encourage authors to submit a full paper will be given by June 15, 2024.

Structured abstracts should be within four pages and may encompass information on each of the following headings: (a) Background and Objectives, (b) Methods, (c) Results, and (d) Conclusions.

Structured abstracts should be submitted by e-mail to the guest editor Susann Fiedler ([susann.fiedler@wu.ac.at](mailto:susann.fiedler@wu.ac.at)).

### Stage 2: Full Paper Submission

For those who have been encouraged to submit a full paper, **the deadline for submission of manuscripts is November 15, 2024.**

Full manuscripts will undergo a blind peer-review process.

## Submission Guidelines for Full Papers

- Only English-language submissions can be considered.
- Contributions must be original (not published previously or currently under review for publication elsewhere).
- Review and original articles should not exceed 45,000 characters and spaces in length, including references, figures, and tables (allowances for figures and tables should be deducted on the basis of size: approximately 1,250 characters for a quarter-page figure/table).
- All research syntheses should adhere to the meta-analytic reporting standards (MARS) proposed by the APA (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/authors/jars.pdf>). Additionally, authors should include a statement in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement <http://www.prisma-statement.org> as a supplemental file for review.
- Other submission formats (short reports, research summaries, opinion pieces, etc.) are also considered; please contact the editors for details.
- Reference citations in the text and in the reference list should be in accordance with the principles set out in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.).
- Supplementary material must be made available through PsychArchives: <https://www.psycharchives.org/>
- See also any recent issue of the journal for exemplary articles.

For detailed author guidelines, please see the journal's website at <http://www.hgf.io/zfp>

## Timeline

- **April 15, 2024:** Abstract submissions due
- **June 15, 2024:** Deadline for abstract selection/call for full papers
- **November 15, 2024:** Full paper submissions due
- **February 15, 2025:** Guest editor feedback to authors
- **April 15, 2025:** Deadline for revised papers
- **May 31, 2025:** Guest editor feedback to revised papers
- **Issue 4 (2025):** Publication of topical issue

## About the Journal

The *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, founded in 1890, is the oldest psychology journal in Europe and the second oldest

in the world. One of the founding editors was Hermann Ebbinghaus. Since 2007, it is published in English and devoted to publishing topical issues that provide state-of-the-art reviews of current research in psychology. For more detailed information about the journal, please visit the official website at <http://www.hgf.io/zfp>.

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