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Randall Engle

Georgia Institute of Technology

One startling assertion that I recall from my Introductory Psychology professor in 1965 was that 25% of the hospital beds in America were filled with people diagnosed with schizophrenia. Of course, the later introduction of drug treatments and outpatient care led to most of those beds being emptied even as many of those individuals ended up swelling our ranks of homeless people. While great progress has been made in understanding and treating this insidious condition, it remains a major societal problem worldwide. I invited Elaine Walker, a busy editor and scholar in her own right, to co-edit a special issue of *Current Directions in Psychological Science* on the topic of schizophrenia, and she has assembled an incredible cast of world-class scholars and authors. I hope you enjoy reading and learning from these papers as much as I have.

Elaine Walker

Emory University

I want to thank Randall Engle, Editor of the journal, for the opportunity to serve as Co-Editor of this special issue on schizophrenia. There is no doubt that the authors who have contributed to this issue represent the top tier of investigators in the field. They are behavioral scientists with a remarkable range of expertise, ranging from the psychosocial factors that affect the onset and course of schizophrenia to the neurochemical and genetic aspects. Taken together, their contributions bring into clearer focus two undeniable inferences that are now shared among most experts in the field. First, despite any wishful thinking to the contrary, it is apparent that the etiology of schizophrenia is highly complex. At every level and stage of analysis, from genetics to prenatal factors to psychosocial and developmental influences, there are multiple interacting processes. Second, although the use of a single diagnostic label, *schizophrenia*, continues to be the convention, it is likely that the syndromes subsumed in this diagnostic category have a variety of contributing causes. These two realities make research on schizophrenia highly challenging.

The contributors to this special issue have risen to that challenge. Beyond their solid backgrounds in psychological science, these researchers have developed expertise in other disciplines and with sophisticated technologies that allow a more direct view of genetic mechanisms, neurochemical processes, and brain structure and function. Their successes in developing interdisciplinary collaborations and expertise have placed them at the forefront of the field. Further, the fact that they are not daunted by the emerging complexity of the field is a testimony to their commitment to scientific research. I am grateful to the distinguished investigators whose work is featured here. They have contributed to a special edition of *Current Directions in Psychological Science* that provides an impressive, state-of-the-art overview of our scientific understanding of schizophrenia, the most debilitating of all mental disorders.