



APA Division 16 School Psychology  
Vol. 58, No. 2

# The School Psychologist

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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*The School Psychologist* is published four times per year by the Division of School Psychology (Div. 16) of the American Psychological Association. Subscriptions are free to members of the Division. For information about subscription rates, submission of articles, or advertising write:

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Issue Month/No.	Closing Date for Submission of Materials	Printing Date	Mailing Date*
Winter (1)	December 1	December 15	January 15
Spring (2)	February 1	February 15	March 15
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## Research Forum

# The Validity of the Graduate Record Examination in Predicting School Psychology Graduate Program Outcomes: A Conditional Probability Analysis

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## INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) has been widely accepted as a useful and reliable tool for assessing and predicting the scholastic achievement of potential graduate students (Sternberg & Williams, 1997). Previous research findings have provided some empirical evidence that the GRE is a valid measurement of probable graduate success (House & Johnson, 1993; House and Johnson, 1998; Kuncel, Hezlett, & Ones, 2001; Sternberg & Williams, 1997). As a result of these and other supportive studies, the scores that the GRE yields have carried significant weight in the graduate admission process (Kuncel et al., 2001; House & Johnson, 2002; Sternberg & Williams, 1997). However, many potential graduate students find that the GRE is stressful, expensive, and often inconvenient to take. Further, the validity and predictability of the GRE have been called into question by some researchers (Goldberg & Alliger, 1992; House & Johnson, 1993; Marston, 1971), and in response, a new wave of research has emerged to confront and examine this surfacing controversy.

## HISTORY AND USE OF THE GRE

The first version of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) was introduced in 1937 and it consisted of eight scores (Seashore, 1959). Within 10 years these eight separate scores were consolidated into two primary values in the revised GRE published in 1949. The updated version of the GRE yielded two scores: Verbal and Quantitative (Seashore, 1959). The verbal component of the exam was intended to measure verbal reasoning abilities such as opposites, analogies, completion, and reading comprehension. The intent of the quantitative portion was to measure numerical and mathematical abilities. Test items in this portion dealt with arithmetic, algebraic problems, and the interpretation of various graphic data (Daily, 1959).

In 1977, the GRE was revised again and a third

section was added to measure an individual's analytical and logical reasoning skills (Jaeger, 1985). This Analytical section went through its own revision in 1981.

The entire GRE general test underwent another comprehensive revision in 1999 (Sampson & Boyer, 2001). The edition contained the Verbal and Quantitative sections. The Analytical section was replaced with a new section called Analytical Writing.

In the arena of graduate academia, the GRE has served a number of valuable purposes. It is best known and supported for its ability to predict an individual's overall grades in graduate school. However, researchers now believe that there are multiple criteria for measuring an individual's graduate school performance (Kuncel et al., 2001). Without a prevailing or agreed upon definition of success, it is extremely difficult for researchers to determine which factors the GRE can validly predict (Kuncel et al., 2001). Examples of such criteria can include graduate course grades, graduate cumulative GPA, examination scores, faculty evaluations, portfolios, and field performance. The existence of such varied measures of success poses a challenge to researchers who seek to assess the soundness of the GRE in predicting graduate school success. Many researchers have responded to this dilemma by selecting a particular criterion and building their study around their chosen measure of performance.

## PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF THE GRE

Researchers examining the predictive validity of the GRE have primarily focused on the strength of correlational relationships between test scores and various graduate program outcomes. Statistically significant, though somewhat modest, relationships have been found between the GRE and graduate school grade performance (House & Johnson, 1998; Kuncel, et al., 2001; Sternberg & Williams, 1997) and other graduate outcomes such as faculty ratings, exam scores, and citation counts

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(Kuncel, et. al, 2001).

Such studies continue to provide evidence of the GRE's validity; and admission committees appear to value these results as they make decisions about an applicant's future. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) strongly advises such committees not to solely use GRE scores as admission criteria (Goldberg & Alliger, 1992) but the test often plays a pivotal role in assessing a graduate application. The GRE has grown to be a popular and influential screening device for graduate applicants, but this growth is troublesome to those who question its validity. Numerous studies have suggested that the GRE is not as valid a predictor as previously believed (Goldberg & Alliger, 1992; House & Johnson, 1993; Marston, 1971).

In his analysis of GRE correlational studies, Ingram found that only 13% of the reviewed studies were able to obtain significant correlations between the GRE and the criterion variables being employed. Ingram remarked that even in studies where significant correlations were found, the variance that they accounted for was so low that they lacked any true usefulness (Ingram, 1983). These conclusions are supported by other researchers (Boudreau, Killip, MacInnis, Milloy, & Rogers 1983; Goldberg & Alliger, 1992; Marston, 1971). One large study by House & Johnson (1993) examined the GRE score and its relationship to graduate degree completion. Their sample was comprised of 250 masters-level graduate students of psychology in which GRE scores were insufficient in predicting the degree completion of psychology students. Such results indicate that there is need for further research in the validity of the GRE and its predictability of graduate success as represented by a multitude of measures.

Each of the above studies utilized analyses that were based on correlations. This approach, while venerable, has limitations in this type of research. Graduate schools typically admit the strongest candidates that they are able to attract, thereby skewing the sample and limiting the range of GRE scores in the subject pool. How can one know whether a person with a low GRE could succeed in a given graduate program if no one is admitted with low scores? Outcome data such as the GPA are often equally restricted, with many graduate programs demanding no grade less than a "B". Other criteria for graduate success tend to be of a pass/fail nature, with little normally distributed, interval data available for analysis. These potential violations of the classic assumptions of normality weaken the

confidence one can place in the results of these analyses.

None of the studies examined above utilized conditional probability in their analyses. The current study, through a conditional probability analysis, examines the predictive validity of the GRE and undergraduate GPA with relation to graduate school success as measured by the selected criteria.

Conditional probability analyses offer a number of advantages when considering the predictive validity of an instrument. Conditional probability produces Positive Predictive Power (PPP) and Negative Predictive Power (NPP) values. In the analyses reported in this study, the PPP is the probability that a subject reached the cutoff on a measure of graduate school success given the condition that they obtained a selected cutoff score on the GRE or GPA. The NPP value is the probability that a subject did not reach the cutoff on the measure of success given the condition that they did not reach the cutoff on the GRE or GPA. The PPP and NPP of an instrument may be of more utility than the more traditional values of sensitivity and specificity. Sensitivity is the probability of a high GRE if the subject has reached a level of graduate school success. Specificity is the probability of a low GRE score if the subject did not obtain success. In contrast, admissions committees attempt to grapple with the opposite questions: what are the probabilities, given these GRE scores, that the subject will or will not succeed in our program?

#### METHOD

Cumulative student records of all graduate students who had attended the school psychology program were reviewed for admissions and outcome data, yielding a sample of 99 participants who completed the program and 33 who failed to finish. The following variables were examined: the year of admission, undergraduate GPA, Verbal, Quantitative, and Cumulative GRE scores, graduate GPA, and program completion.

A number of files did not have complete admissions documentation. If a file lacked GRE data, it was omitted from the study. Graduate school grade point averages were not available for students who had not completed the program. However, since only 3 of the 33 students who failed to complete the program left due to problems with their coursework, it seems reasonable that course grades were not the critical issue for those who failed to finish their thesis.

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#### RESULTS

Descriptive data for each variable were examined for outliers and assumptions of normality. Table 1 displays the descriptive data for those students who completed the program and those who did not complete the program. Although the

scores below the minimum may have been admitted if their undergraduate GPA was acceptable. Also, students with low GPAs were admitted if they had acceptable GRE values. As a result of this practice, we were able to examine whether individuals with low GPA and GRE scores could still succeed in our

**Table 1**

**Descriptive statistics for participants who completed and did not complete graduate school psychology program.**

Program Completers (n = 99)	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
GPA	3.15	.39	2.03	3.95
Age Admitted	25.54	5.76	21	47
Grad GPA	3.66	.21	3.18	4.00
GRE Verbal	502.83	78.48	350	750
GRE Quant	510.40	75.85	340	660
GRE Comb	1012.22	134.29	690	1330
<b>Program Drop Outs (n = 33)</b>				
GPA	3.12	.38	2.00	3.84
Age Admitted	26.30	6.16	21	46
GRE Verbal	516.97	90.05	320	700
GRE Quant	533.94	82.61	390	730
GRE Comb	1050.61	144.78	730	1340

**Table 2**

**Conditional probability values of graduate program outcomes using current admission cutoffs.**

Admission Standard	Program completion	GPA > mean	GPA 1sd > mean
Undergrad GPA >3.00	PPP .48	PPP .55	PPP .57
	NPP .46	NPP .59	NPP .73
GRE Quantitative >500	PPP .41	PPP .49	PPP .59
	NPP .35	NPP .48	NPP .52
GRE Verbal >500	PPP .46	PPP .56	PPP .58
	NPP .21	NPP .57	NPP .62
GRE Combined > 1000	PPP .47	PPP .55	PPP .56
	NPP .46	NPP .58	NPP .62
GRE Quantitative > 500 and GRE Verbal > 500	PPP .42	PPP .51	PPP .55
	NPP .44	NPP .53	NPP .54
GPA > 3.00 and GRE	PPP .70	PPP .59	PPP .64
Quantitative >500 and GRE Verbal > 500	NPP .51	NPP .53	NPP .53

program admission standards call for a minimum GPA of 3.0, a GRE Verbal and Quantitative minimum of 500, and a combined GRE score minimum of 1000, it was common practice to admit students who were deficient in one area if they met standards in another. For example, a student applicant with GRE

graduate program. In this sample, people with combined GRE scores as low as 690 or a GPA as low as 2.03 were able to successfully graduate with a Masters degree from our program. An analysis of variance was performed to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups. There were no statistically significant differences in GPA or GRE scores for participants who finished the program and those who did not.

Bivariate correlational analyses were computed on GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, graduate school GPA, and program completion. Because 99 students finished the program while 33 did not, the program completion variable is skewed. Therefore, the correlations involving this variable must be considered with that potential confound in mind. None of the predictor variables (i.e., undergraduate GPA, Verbal GRE, Quantitative GRE, and Combined GRE) correlated significantly with program completion. However, undergraduate GPA was significantly correlated ( $r = .34$ ,  $p = .001$ ) with graduate school GPA. Verbal GRE ( $r = .28$ ,  $p = .008$ ) and Combined GRE ( $r = .24$ ,  $p = .03$ ) were also significantly

correlated with graduate school GPA. The Quantitative GRE score did not significantly correlate with graduate school GPA.

Table 2 exhibits the results of a conditional probability analysis using current program cutoffs. For example, given the condition that the student

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exceeded the cutoff of an undergrad GPA of 3.0, what was the probability that he/she (a) finished the program, (b) achieved a graduate school GPA above the mean, or (c) obtained a GPA a standard deviation above the mean?

Because Positive Predictive Power (PPP) and Negative Predictive Power (NPP) values are sensitive to prevalence rates, each variable has these values calculated with a prevalence rate of .5 for ease of interpretation. Positive Predictive Power is the proportion of participants who achieve to a certain level (such as above average grades or program completion) after meeting the cutoff on a predictor variable (such as undergraduate GPA or Combined GRE). Negative Predictive Power is the proportion of participants who fail to achieve to a certain level (such as above average grades or program completion) after not meeting a cutoff on a predictor variable. To understand the adjustment to a .5 prevalence rate, consider the following example. If there was a sample of applicants where you knew that 50% would pass and 50% would fail (a prevalence rate of .5), one should be able to flip a coin and successfully predict the outcome 50% of the time through sheer chance. Therefore, if the PPP or NPP of a certain screening test exceeds .5, the predictor is better than chance - if it is less, one would do better by flipping a coin. Examination of Table 2, where the PPP and NPP were calculated for a prevalence rate of .5, reveals that none of the variables individually predict who will successfully finish the graduate program better than a coin would. The combination of the GRE scores and GPA measures reveals the overall best positive predictor, where the hypothetical selection committee would be right 70% of the time if they selected an applicant who would finish the program based on these criteria. If they rejected a student for not meeting these criteria, they would be right 51% of the time, at least with a prevalence rate of .5. In terms of academic performance as measured by graduate GPA, undergraduate GPA is the best overall predictor. The combination of the GRE scores and the undergraduate GPA has the best PPP, while the undergraduate GPA alone attained the highest NPP.

It is important to remember that both PPP and NPP scores vary when the prevalence rate changes. For example, only 16% of students can acquire a graduate GPA one standard deviation above the mean, so the prevalence rate would be .16 for this outcome. Lower prevalence rates (in this case from .5 to .16) radically alter PPP and NPP values. When

the prevalence rate is set at .16, the PPP of our best predictors (the combination of undergraduate GPA and GRE scores) is only .28, so the admissions committee would be wrong 72% of the time if they expected a student who entered with high GRE and undergrad GPA scores to perform a standard deviation above the mean. They would be correct 85% of the time if they assumed that a student who didn't meet the high criteria would not achieve at such a high level, but that is hardly better than the prevalence rate (.84) and therefore not much better than chance. Prevalence rate affects PPP and NPP in the opposite direction as well. The course completion prevalence rate is higher than .5. Using the actual prevalence rate of .75 (99 completed versus 33 who did not), the committee would be correct 88% of the time when they approved a student who met all of the admissions criteria of high undergraduate GPA and high GRE scores. On the other hand, if an applicant were rejected because they did not exceed the cutoff on all of these criteria, the committee would be right (Negative Predictive Power) to refuse entrance only 25% of the time.

Some professors have argued that higher admissions standards would result in better students. But would higher cutoffs improve the predictive power of these measures in selecting strong students? Table 3 shows the results of PPP and NPP calculations if the admissions cutoffs were raised one standard deviation above current levels. In this analysis, then, only the top 16% of the students who attended our program would meet this cutoff. With the higher cutoffs, none of the predictors performed above the chance level in terms of program completion. For graduate GPA outcomes, the undergrad GPA, the GRE Quantitative, and the GRE combined scores performed at roughly the same level, with PPP values ranging from .71 to .79 and NPP from .54 to .56. None of the students in this sample simultaneously had an undergrad GPA and GRE scores a standard deviation above the mean. The NPP performance of the combined score, however, was no better than chance. This suggests that a committee that contemplated rejecting a student because they did not achieve high scores simultaneously on all three admittance criteria would be equally correct in predicting GPA outcomes if they had replaced these measures with a coin.

Do low scores on the predictor variables

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predict low outcomes? Table 4 illustrates the results of our conditional probability analyses. An undergrad GPA a standard deviation below the mean appears to be a reasonably sound predictor of the outcomes used in this study. In particular, a low undergrad GPA has a PPP of .91 in predicting a graduate GPA below the mean. Further, this predictor has a PPP of .66 for program non-completers, the best value in this study. The GRE measures did not exceed chance for program non-completion, but had PPP values ranging from .78 to .83 for predicting below the mean graduate GPA. All predictors had reasonable PPP values in predicting graduate GPA a standard deviation below the mean,

with undergrad GPA again having the highest score at .79. However, the NPP for all predictors were very modest for GPA outcomes, ranging from .50 to .57. These results suggest that a committee may have some confidence in assuming that a prospective student with very low predictor scores will also have low outcomes. However, a score higher than the cutoff is not a good predictor of high outcome scores.

#### DISCUSSION

Conditional probability is a procedure which should be considered whenever the effectiveness of a screening or diagnostic procedure is being

evaluated. Instruments that do very well in research settings often falter when placed in the real world. This is particularly true of tests that are designed to distinguish a low prevalence group from the larger population. Tests with impressive reliability and validity values will render the wrong diagnosis more often than the right one if the prevalence rate of the target population is low enough. In terms of the GRE, admissions committees are often attempting to distinguish a small group of elite students from a larger group of applicants, a classic situation where a low prevalence rate can adversely affect test performance. Committee members who place their faith in the GRE will wave off the results of critical correlational studies due to the restricted range of both the predictor and outcome variables. This criticism is justified, and other statistical procedures such as conditional probability should be considered. Since the GRE does not perform well in correlational studies for the most part, how does it perform using a procedure such as

Table 3

#### Conditional probability values of graduate program outcomes with admission cutoffs a standard deviation above current standards.

Admission Standard	Finish	GPA > mean	GPA 1sd > mean
Undergrad GPA >3.52	PPP .46	PPP .73	PPP .74
	NPP .49	NPP .54	NPP .56
GRE Quantitative >618	PPP .37	PPP .79	PPP .71
	NPP .49	NPP .53	NPP .52
GRE Verbal >591	PPP .42	PPP .68	PPP .65
	NPP .49	NPP .54	NPP .53
GRE Combined > 1167	PPP .42	PPP .72	PPP .74
	NPP .49	NPP .54	NPP .56
GRE Quantitative > 618 and GRE Verbal > 591	PPP .13	PPP 1.0	PPP .78
	NPP .52	NPP .52	NPP .51
GPA > 3.52 and GRE Quantitative >618 and GRE Verbal > 591	PPP 0.0	PPP 0.0	PPP 0.0
	NPP .49	NPP .50	NPP .50

Table 4

#### Conditional probability values of undesirable graduate program outcomes for students with admission scores a standard deviation below the mean.

Admission Standard	Did Not Finish	GPA < mean	GPA 1sd < mean
Undergrad GPA <2.76	PPP .66	PPP .91	PPP .79
	NPP .53	NPP .55	NPP .56
GRE Quantitative <438	PPP .47	PPP .78	PPP .70
	NPP .49	NPP .56	NPP .56
GRE Verbal <406	PPP .48	PPP .79	PPP .65
	NPP .50	NPP .55	NPP .53
GRE Combined > 883	PPP .41	PPP .82	PPP .73
	NPP .48	NPP .57	NPP .57
GRE Quantitative > 438 and GRE Verbal > 406	PPP .29	PPP .83	PPP .72
	NPP .48	NPP .54	NPP .54
GPA > 2.76 and GRE Quantitative >438 and GRE Verbal > 406	PPP 0.0	PPP 0.0	PPP 0.0
	NPP .50	NPP .50	NPP .50



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## The Validity of the Graduate Record Examination in Predicting School Psychology Graduate Program Outcomes: A Conditional Probability Analysis

conditional probability?

Overall, it appears that both the GRE scores and under graduate GPA scores have limited uses as predictors of graduate school completion or performance. There are clearly a large number of variables that impact the outcomes utilized in this study beyond what is measured by the selected measures. In the case of the program studied here, very few students failed to finish due to academic concerns. Overwhelmingly, the biggest reason for failure to complete the program was due to students not finishing their theses. What variables influence thesis completion? Experience suggests that people simply get on with their lives after the course work is completed. Some stay focused enough to finish their degree, some don't – but whatever the variables are that influence thesis completion, they do not seem to be captured by their GRE and GPA scores.

Measuring differences in terms of academic performance as measured by graduate school GPA is somewhat confounded by restricted range. In this study the difference between a graduate GPA a standard deviation below the mean and one a standard deviation above the mean was less than half a point. When considering the variability inherent in how professors assign grades, is this difference meaningful? Is a student with a GPA of 3.45 really that much weaker than a student with a 3.87? If this difference is legitimate, the undergrad GPA and the GRE scores generally do not do a credible job of predicting them. With the cutoffs utilized by this program, these predictors by and large do little better than chance.

Can the GRE or undergrad GPA scores be used at all with any confidence? The results of this study suggest that high GRE (>1167) or undergrad GPA (>3.52) scores predict good academic performance, but not whether they will complete the program. Low undergraduate GPA scores (<2.76) predict both program non-completion and low graduate GPA. Scores within a standard deviation of the mean do not appear to validly predict the outcomes used in this study.

Some members of admissions committees will acknowledge the limitations of these instruments and adopt a strategy where they will consider information from several sources. The validity of reference letters or interviews is not considered here, but when considered together, does the GRE add to the predictive validity of the undergrad GPA

scores? In this study, they did not. The PPP values increased slightly when GRE scores were considered with the undergrad GPA scores, but the NPP values declined.

The program examined in this study offers advantages to this line of inquiry that may not be found in larger and perhaps more prestigious universities. Because students have been routinely accepted who have undergraduate GPA scores less than 3.0 or GRE combined scores less than 1000, we have an opportunity to see how these students do in a graduate program. Generally, they do just fine. Only students with the very lowest scores seem to perform any differently than their peers, and the undergrad GPA is clearly the best predictor of outcomes for this group.

As psychologists, we are supposed to be exemplars of data-based decision making. Yet, an instrument with questionable predictive validity is routinely used to select candidates for our programs. Worse, the GRE presents a significant financial and emotional obstacle for any student contemplating a school psychology career. How many students were denied a slot in a graduate program based on GRE results when they would, in fact, have made fine school psychologists? How many students did not apply at all due to lack of funds?

The results of this study suggest that admission committees should be very cautious in their use of GRE scores in their selection process.

**Please e-mail all submissions for *The Commentary Section* to: [LReddy2271@aol.com](mailto:LReddy2271@aol.com)**

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# Psychosocial Problems and Learning Disability Type: A Fruitful Area for Future Research in School Psychology

Rebecca S. Martínez, Indiana University

**N**otwithstanding the existence of different types of learning disabilities (e.g., reading, writing and math), researchers who conduct clinical and empirical studies about the psychosocial functioning of children and youth with LD generally categorize research participants into a single, homogeneous LD category. However, the



heterogeneity of subjects in LD samples reported in this research literature limits the generalizability of the findings to students with LD in specific academic areas. Extensive clinical and empirical work has documented that many children and adolescents with learning disabilities are vulnerable to a variety of

psychosocial problems (Arthur, 2003) including social isolation (Mishna, 1996), peer rejection (Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995), loneliness (Margalit, 1998), social skills deficits (Kavale & Forness, 1996), depressive symptomatology (Bender, Rosenkrans, & Crane, 1999) and feelings of inadequacy (Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2002). Nevertheless, because the type of learning disability historically has not been considered in this literature, we are unable to make compelling statements about the correlation between psychosocial problems and academic deficits in particular academic areas.

Over a decade ago, Rourke and Fuerst (1992) argued that the learning disabilities literature was fraught by “an almost lack of sensitivity to the notion that there may be subtypes of children with LD for whom various kinds of...social learning may be more or less difficult to achieve” (p. 362). Although the neuropsychological literature has frequently identified specific LD subtypes (based on neuropsychological profiles), participants employed in this research are frequently selected from clinic-referred samples, and results of these studies are not necessarily generalizable to the general school population of students with specific school-identified types of LD.

Only recently have researchers begun to

investigate the connection between psychosocial problems and learning disability type. In particular, the recent empirical work of Scarborough and Parker (2003) and Martínez and Semrud-Clikeman (in press) suggests that LD type (e.g., reading, math, and reading + math) is clearly associated with the presence of parent and self-reported psychosocial problems. This burgeoning literature reveals that research investigating the relationship between LD type and psychosocial problems is a promising theme for future clinical and empirical investigations.

## WHAT DOES THE CURRENT RESEARCH SAY?

Scarborough and Parker (2003) examined the psychosocial functioning of 57 children longitudinally at ages 8 and 14. On the basis of standardized assessment results, the research participants were placed in three groups: research-identified reading disabled (RD-RI), school-identified reading disabled (RD-SI), math disabled (MD) and normal achievers (NLD). Using mothers' reports on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), Scarborough and Parker found that children with math disabilities (regardless of a comorbid reading disability) had higher parent ratings (i.e., greater behavioral problems) on the CBCL compared to children with reading disabilities only. Indeed, 64% and 73% of the students with a specific math LD were rated by their mothers to be at risk or clinically significant on the scales that measure internalizing problems and total problems, respectively. Thus, the type of LD shown by the participants was clearly associated with the presence of psychosocial problems, and the authors concluded that LD type ought to be considered a key variable in future research.

Most recently, Martínez and Semrud-Clikeman used the Behavioral Assessment System for Children Self-Report (BASC-SR; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1998) to compare the psychosocial adjustment of young adolescents in four groups: reading disability only (RD), math disability only (MD), reading + math disability (RD + MD) and normal achievement (NA). Martínez and Semrud-Clikeman found that subjects with multiple learning disabilities (RD + MD)

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### Psychosocial Problems and Learning Disability Type: A Fruitful Area for Future Research in School Psychology

reported poorer functioning (i.e., higher T-scores) on school maladjustment, clinical maladjustment, emotional symptoms index, attitude to school, atypicality, and depression as compared to the NA group, but not when compared to subjects with a single learning disability (reading or math). They further documented that youths with a math disability only and with multiple LD scored the highest on self-reported school problems on the BASC-SR. This study offers preliminary evidence that children with multiple LD (ie., math + reading) and single math LD may be qualitatively different in their psychosocial functioning when compared to participants with RD only and those who are achieving normally. The findings from both the studies cited above underscore the importance of disaggregating participants by their LD type in future research investigating the association between psychosocial functioning and learning disabilities.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to future research agendas aimed at studying psychosocial problems by learning disability type, it is imperative to begin validating theoretical models concerning the direction of influence of psychosocial problems and LD. Several researchers have generated hypotheses to explain the underlying reasons for the frequent co-occurrence of emotional problems among students with LD. One theory purports that psychosocial problems lead to academic failure (Guay, Boivin, & Hodges, 1999), while another posits that academic difficulties and poor emotional functioning co-occur (Chapman, 1988). Yet a third position, the academic difficulties hypothesis, posits that academic failure leads to impaired psychosocial functioning (Roeser, Eccles, & Strobel, 1998). That is, for children with LD, psychosocial problems are an expected cognitive and emotional response to chronic academic failure. Longitudinal work will help identify whether academic problems precede psychosocial difficulties, whether psychosocial difficulties precede psychosocial problems, or whether they co-occur, as well as which LD types are more vulnerable to specific psychosocial problems. Wong (2003) recently emphasized the significance of longitudinal research in understanding how contextual factors (e.g., school size, classroom placement, friendship patterns, severity of LD) interact with individual factors to impact the psychosocial development of children and adolescents with learning disabilities.

In conclusion, there is an obvious need for

further cross-sectional and longitudinal work regarding the psychosocial functioning of students with specific learning disability types. Research by Scarborough and Parker and Martínez and Semrud-Clikeman demonstrates that this is a very fruitful area for future research. Undoubtedly, this work is especially relevant to school psychologists. Greater sensitivity to LD types is critical to efforts aimed at developing appropriate and effective interventions that prevent and decrease the psychosocial problems experienced by specific LD types.

**Please e-mail all submissions for The Commentary Section to: LReddy2271@aol.com**

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## Practice Forum

## Open-mindedness to Family Interventions

Robert Henley Woody  
University of Nebraska at Omaha



“Achieving an open mind is a challenge to one’s personal and professional values.”

There is a sound rationale for training school psychologists for family analysis and interventions (Woody, 2000). It is clear that:

Federal and state laws mandate family involvement and services pertaining to school psychology (Woody, 1994; Woody, Woody, & Greenberg, 1991);

there is a strong reason for school psychologists’ using systemic approaches in family interventions (Woody, 1989; Woody & Woody, 1994); National Association for School Psychologists (NASP, 2000) accreditation standards leave no doubt that school psychologists must be prepared to serve families; and psychoeducational research supports that the child’s learning and educational achievement will be enhanced by a strong parent-school partnership (2001),

Given the preceding rationale, it is logical to assert that today’s school psychology trainees, trainers, and practitioners should be open-minded to developing professional competence in and commitment to family interventions. With all due respect, if family-related knowledge and skills are not cultivated, the deficit may be attributable to neglect, resistance, or closed-mindedness. That is, contemporary conditions of society suggest that family interventions should be an integral part of modern school psychology.

Regrettably, interactions with school psychology trainers and practitioners too often reveal that they maintain an allegiance to theories and practices of the past, endorse an avant-garde “fad of the day,” or (perhaps worst of all) simply teach or adhere to what they learned in graduate studies (often years before). In other words, there is a resistance to recognizing and applying substance, such as about family interventions, that is outside of the predetermined cognitive pigeonholes—and there is a concomitant disinterest in or disavowal of the relevance of family interventions to school psychology.

Looking to attitudinal research in social psychology, a person is prone to hold enduring beliefs about certain goals (Rokeach, 1973). These beliefs constitute the idiosyncratic value system, which provides guidance for developing and maintaining the self concept (Kristiansen & Hotte,

1996). Also, values wield powerful control over mental processing of new information and experiences (Franzoi, 2003). Thus, self-related motives govern actions, such as receiving, objectively processing, and accepting information. In everyday language, personal needs may lead to an outcome of being dogmatic about what constitutes appropriate substance for the teaching and practice of school psychology, which would be, of course, contradictory to an appropriate and essential pursuit of professionalism.

Achieving an open mind is a challenge to one’s personal and professional values. Nonetheless, an open mind is a prized asset, because it allows the trainer or practitioner to be a modern scholar and prepared to provide services (whether teaching, research, or practice) that yield optimum benefits to the service recipients (whether student/trainees, the profession and society, or clients). The trainer or practitioner who clings to the past, saying for example, “That wasn’t what I was trained to do” or “I think the one superior approach is the one that I advocate,” has relinquished a critical ingredient to cultivating and maintaining professionalism.

In part because changing one’s values reaches to the core of personal/professional identity, there is no easy solution. However closed-mindedness can be warded off via making a conscious commitment to:

seeking new knowledge in a wide variety of theoretical, research, technical, and practice areas; recognizing that no bit of knowledge is irrefutable or cannot be refined or improved upon; and considering viewpoints that are seemingly opposed to one’s preferred viewpoint.

If all else fails, the trainer or practitioner can be motivated by the mantra “the longer that I am in the profession of school psychology, the less I know” [J].

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# The Assessment of Professional Work Characteristics and the Practice of School Psychology

Krista L. R. Cournoyer, Rhode Island College

**H**ow often have you met a bright student who has a high grade point average (GPA), good standardized test scores, but poor social skills? How often have you heard about the school psychologist who is wonderful with children but irresponsible and unethical in her practice of school psychology? How many people have told you about the school psychologist who is extremely intelligent, but does not know how to effectively relate with children or adults?

Recently, in my role as a consulting school psychologist, I was speaking with a senior school psychologist in a local school system. After 10 minutes of conversation, I had no idea what this person was trying to communicate to me. During the entire conversation, eye contact was poor, there was no reciprocal verbal exchange, and the content of his communication was a word salad of disjointed professional jargon. This school psychologist did not seem aware of my reaction to him. I considered that this may have been a temporary state for this school psychologist - maybe he was having a "bad day," we all have those. After all, how could he be functioning effectively as a school psychologist if such social skills were characteristic for him? However, based on feedback from other professionals in the district, it seems that this behavior was typical for this school psychologist. I wondered, if I was a parent speaking with this person, would I feel comfortable enough to say, "I have no idea what you just said?" If I was a 3rd-grade student who was being counseled by him, would I be able to say, "I am not

comfortable with you?" If I was a teacher, would I be able to say, "You don't seem to hear what I am saying to you?" I also wondered, who trained this person and why didn't they give him feedback about his poor communication skills?

Similarly, in my role as a school psychology program director, I have worked with graduate students who have high GPAs, high standardized test scores, and glowing letters of recommendation, but who also have personality traits that will make their work with children and youth a risky prospect. For example, although all people deserve a chance to grow and improve upon their interactions with others, is a student with narcissistic or borderline personality features going to make enough personal change to become effective in his or her work with children, parents, and teachers?

How does the profession of school psychology safeguard the public from practitioners who have problems in character or difficult personality traits? How do we protect from harm the vulnerable populations with which we work? Although the practice of professional psychology is guided by the American Psychological Association's (APA) (1992) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, a literature search on practicing psychologists and issues of character and moral conduct returned no evidence of scholarly writing in this area, with the exception of one article written by Johnson and Campbell (2003). With the vulnerability of the populations with which we work, why is the body of literature not larger? In

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## The Assessment of Professional Work Characteristics and the Practice of School Psychology

other professional domains, such as law and medicine, candidates for the profession must demonstrate good moral character in order to be granted a license to practice (American Medical Association, 2000; Johnson & Campbell, 2003; McCulley, 2001). Is there a similar process in professional psychology?

### PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Regarding professional psychology as a whole, Johnson and Campbell (2003) discuss the lack of and need for the development of national standards of minimal character and psychological fitness requirements for professional psychologists. They state that the field of professional psychology pays minimal attention to ensuring good character and psychological fitness of practicing psychologists. To support this claim they report that the American Psychological Association's (APA) Guidelines for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology (2001) does not include any minimal requirements in these areas for candidate admissions, training, or graduation.

### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Specific to school psychology, the literature regarding this topic is nonexistent. However, in the most recent revision of National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in Psychology (2000), programs are called to apply "specific published criteria, both objective and qualitative, for the assessment and admission of candidates to the program at each level and for candidate retention and progression in the program," (NASP, 2000, p. 19). In this handbook, NASP identifies six important Professional Work Characteristics (PWC) for school psychologists. Regarding "specific published criteria" related to these PWC, only two NASP-accredited school psychology training programs, Rhode Island College and Winthrop University, have web-based program handbooks that address professional work characteristics. So, should school psychology training programs be monitoring, educating, and advising future school psychologists about these important skills? Are there criteria that trainers of school psychologists might use to prevent problematic candidates from entering the profession? If problems with professional work characteristics emerge during training, should they be addressed? I believe the answer to these three questions is yes. Trainers of school psychologists are the gatekeepers to the profession, and we have an

ethical responsibility to admit, educate, and produce school psychologists who will effectively work with the vulnerable populations our profession serves. By what principles, then, should we monitor such character development? The guiding principles we can use are NASP's Professional Work Characteristics (PWC) (2000).

### PROFESSIONAL WORK CHARACTERISTICS AND NASP

NASP has identified six PWCs that are critical to becoming an effective school psychologist. Evaluations of these PWCs are also part of the requirements for becoming a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP). These professional work characteristics are: (1) respect for human diversity, (2) effective communication skills, (3) effective interpersonal relations, (4) ethical responsibility, (5) adaptability, and (6) initiative and dependability.

Although I believe that most students who apply to and are accepted into our programs are intelligent, motivated people, issues of character, personality traits, or social skills that may interfere with ethical and child-safe interactions are not always identified during the admissions process and are not formally evaluated thereafter. This leaves the program in the bind of deciding what to do with a student who may be ineffective at best, harmful at worst, when working with children, youth, and their families. In that vein, I believe that faculty in school psychology training programs have an ethical responsibility to the public to ensure that we make PWCs explicit and that we evaluate candidates' attainment of PWCs throughout their training.

In our training program at Rhode Island College, we have struggled with these issues and have concluded that there are three logical checkpoints for evaluation of PWCs during training, including the: (a) admission; (b) coursework/practica, and (c) internship phases. (See Table 1 for sample plan used by Rhode Island College's School Psychology Training Program.)

### PWC AND THE ADMISSIONS PHASE

During the first part of the admissions phase, most APA-accredited and NASP-approved school psychology programs require students to submit an application packet including, (a) undergraduate and/or graduate GPA, (b) standardized test scores, and (c) letters of reference, but what about PWCs? Although grades and test scores provide objective data to consider, letters of reference are typically nondiscriminatory, in that those who write such letters often are those who believe they can write

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**The Assessment of Professional Work Characteristics and the Practice of School Psychology**

something complimentary. In addition to this information, program directors can easily generate a rubric to have those who write letters of reference rank a student's functioning on all six PWCs. Applicants who score poorly on one or more of the PWC may be red-flagged as a potential risk for the program.

During the second part of the admissions phase, candidates are typically invited to the campus for interviews. At this time, PWCs may be evaluated as part of the interview process. For example, the candidate's verbal and nonverbal communication skills can be observed and may be rated during the interview. Questions may also be asked and objectively scored by the admissions committee that relate to other PWCs that are less easily observed in an interview, such as respect for diversity, adaptability, and initiative and dependability. The candidates' PWC scores can then be factored in with the other more concrete admission criteria, such as GPA and standardized test scores.

At this phase of the training process, it will be difficult to identify and screen out all candidates with problematic PWCs. It follows that monitoring of PWCs must continue to the next phase of training.

**PWCS AND THE COURSEWORK/  
PRACTICA PHASE**

Once a student is admitted to the program, the program has a responsibility to effectively educate students about PWCs and gather data to provide evidence of students' attention to PWCs. Upon admittance to the program, it is important for faculty and field-based supervisors to demonstrate and educate program candidates about the values of good PWCs. A description of such characteristics should be included in the program's handbook and be directly addressed in student orientations and in coursework. As part of course grades, instructors should evaluate students on their demonstration of PWCs in class. For example, evidence of effective interpersonal relationships can be assessed by observing how well candidates interact with classmates during group discussions or presentations. During practica, assessment of the candidates' PWCs may become part of the evaluation process that field-based supervisors typically conduct at the end of a semester. These scores may then be factored in to candidates' grades, in addition to other more traditional factors, like exam grades or portfolio performance. In terms of promoting candidates' self-awareness, reflection pieces on their strengths and weaknesses relative to

**TABLE 1 –  
PWC Monitoring Plan used by Rhode Island College**

Admissions Phase	Coursework & Practica Phase	Internship Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated by authors of letters of recommendation.</li> <li>• Rated as part of interview process by Admissions Committee.</li> <li>• Described in School Psychology Program Handbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Described in Field Experiences Handbook</li> <li>• Evaluated by course instructors as part of course grade.</li> <li>• Evaluated by field-based supervisor on evaluation forms.</li> <li>• Self-evaluation in Training Portfolio.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated by field-and college-based supervisors; score becomes part of course grade.</li> <li>• Self-evaluation in Internship Portfolio.</li> </ul>

PWCs could be required during school-based practica. At Rhode Island College we include this reflection piece as part of the pre-internship training portfolio, which is graded for content and self-awareness.

These data will also be important to keep and use as a paper trail of evidence that clearly demonstrates the need for a student to be counseled out of a training program, should the candidate not make changes based on instructor, supervisor, or advisor feedback about PWC weaknesses. Being counseled out of a training program is sometimes the only option for a candidate and, although not pleasant, also saves the candidate from further investing in a profession to which he or she is not suited.

**PWCS AND THE INTERNSHIP PHASE**

If candidates' PWCs have been effectively evaluated and constructive feedback given during the coursework/practica phase of training, candidates with significantly poor PWCs will have been counseled out of the program by this phase. However, monitoring of PWCs should continue until commencement of the terminal degree. During the internship phase, candidates can be evaluated by internship and college-based supervisors on the continuing development of their PWCs. Such evaluations will continue to be part of course grades and feedback given to candidates during supervision by trainers. As part of their internship seminar candidates could also be required to write a reflection piece on their strengths and weaknesses relative to PWCs, indicating areas of satisfaction as well as areas in need of improvement. Action plans for change in weak areas should be included in this reflection. By the day of commencement, candidates and their trainers will know that the graduates possess the necessary PWCs to become knowledgeable and effective school psychologists.

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**The Assessment of Professional Work Characteristics and the Practice of School Psychology****CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The literature in the field of professional psychology is scant regarding guidelines for attention to issues such as character and psychological fitness. Specific to the field of school psychology, NASP has generated a list of professional work characteristics (PWCs) essential to becoming an effective school psychologist. As a profession we need to embrace and use these PWCs, especially during the training of future school psychologists. School psychology training programs are best suited to educate, monitor, and enforce attainment of PWCs. Such training programs must have checkpoints throughout the training process during which candidates' development of PWCs will be monitored, evaluated, and enhanced. School psychology training programs have the duty to ensure that as a profession we uphold our obligations in serving the vulnerable populations with which we work by doing the following: (1) employ faculty and field supervisors who model effective PWCs; (2) educate students about the value of PWCs; (3) make public such criteria in program handbooks; (4) evaluate these characteristics throughout the three phases of training; (5) provide guidance and make recommendations to program

candidates who experience difficulties in PWCs; and (6) counsel candidates out of the program who do not make improvements in the attainment of PWCs. As a profession, we also must continue to tend to the development of PWCs by conducting research regarding their utility and by reporting on effective methods for PWC assessment.

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**New!**

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## Book Review

# Discussing Visible and Invisible Differences in Social Context

**A Review of: Robinson, J. D. & James, L. C. (Eds.) (2003). *Diversity in Human Interactions: The Tapestry of America*, New York: Oxford University Press.**

**Carol Robinson-Zañartu, San Diego State University**

John D. Robinson and Larry C. James have put together a “must have” book for those teaching and learning about issues of diversity in human interaction. Unlike the common format of “diversity” texts that chronicle the issues of one group after another, Robinson and James set out to create a readable and accessible guide to stimulate discussions about human interaction involving diverse perspectives and experiences, both cultural and beyond, and to help the readers learn not to be afraid to have those discussions. They have done this by assembling a collection of chapters, for the most part extremely stimulating, filled with examples the reader can grasp and grapple with, relevant history and statistics where warranted, and suggestions for how the issues raised should concern the mental health professional. Each of their chapter authors is both knowledgeable and personable in text, reaching out to the reader with personal experience and insights as well as research based findings. Although some chapters clearly are more compelling than others, and many do address specific groups or issues, the total package achieves its goal. That the text is not overwhelmingly academic makes it more accessible for its purpose, although most chapters refer the reader clearly to other research and reading material.

Conveniently organized into 12 chapters, *Diversity in Human Interaction* should serve as an excellent base book from which to promote discussion, deeper research into any of the issues raised, as well as help learners generate notions of how to apply this learning. These things are generally not well done in many texts. Robinson and James chose to begin with a powerful chapter on general problems “brought on by the discordant structure of human interactions,” followed by several chapters that focus on issues of race and ethnicity, four more that deal with less visible factors, and finally a chapter that was supposed to deal with “how opinions of others guide our daily interaction,” (p. xviii). This chapter unfortunately

falls short of that by focusing on research issues and diversity (important topic, but not what was promised). Finally, virtually all of the authors, in their own ways, recommend engaging deeply in self-examination related to each issue raised.

Several chapters are real standouts, one of which is Beverly Greene’s opening chapter on social privilege, disadvantage and discord in human relations, in which she rises to the call of the authors for a readable yet poignant style to introduce many of the major issues in race relations, and to present some relatively fresh and important perspectives. Greene initially raises the notion of diversity as a socially constructed concept, but proposes that “any serious discussion of differences leads to a range of other questions” (p. 3). One of the key questions is the “so what” of difference – what makes the differences important? This often posed question is one she handles richly, and with a good facilitator to accompany study of the book, should be a key jumping off point for the discussions the authors hope to foster. Greene acknowledges that individuals hold multiple identities, yet points out that some differences are deemed more salient than others – they do not hold equal value or power in the arena of socio-cultural difference. She contends that the tension around our differences actually comes from “... something that the differences are socially endowed with” (p. 4).

Greene moves into issues of attributions of behavior, social privilege, internalized racism and multiple identities in a very full chapter that could serve well as a two- or three-session introduction to a course. Bringing to bear such examples as Americans’ love of hating the poor, she weaves in and makes accessible issues such as the legitimization of privilege characteristics by deeming them the norm, the role of socially constructed boundaries, and internalized racism. She examines the phenomenon outlined by Nancy Boyd-Franklin (1993) in a blunt observation that people welcome



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discussion of “others” until diversity discussions and training get to the point of examining oneself and the systems that perpetuate privilege.

The chapter topics that follow range from understanding the influences and histories that shape the experiences and world views of clients and communities of color, from the African Diaspora to the boarding schools and other genocidal attempts in Native America. The chapters both continue and extend the conversation on key issues such as spirituality; disability; gay, lesbian and bisexual identity; and research issues across cultures. In several chapters, notably Ybarra’s chapter on becoming *American*, Austria’s chapter on people of Asian descent, and the chapters on biracial identity and aging and ageism, the tone is measured and geared to facilitating discussion rather than raising rage or indignation. Good basic information is shared – from historical antecedents to riveting statistics (e.g., American Indians commit suicide at a rate 46% higher than all other races combined, and they die from accidents at an 84% higher rate), behaviors and attitudes, and clear examples of behavior often misinterpreted in mental health or school settings. It is done in a way that should open conversation to the new learner in this area. Others, notably Caldwell-Colbert, Henderson-Daniel and Dudley-Grant’s chapter on the African Diaspora; Cynthia Kanoelani Kenui’s chapter on Na Kanaka Maoli; Haldeman and Buhrke’s chapter on the diversity of sexual orientation; and the Leigh and Brice chapter on disability are powerful and unique in their own right, and worthy of more than casual mention.

Caldwell-Colbert, Henderson-Daniel & Dudley-Grant share specific ideas and suggestions for developing effective interpersonal interactions with Black Americans, and they base them in historical and cultural contexts. They not only talk about stereotypes, but why the reader must have insight into the impact of those stereotypes. They discuss significant influences of the African Diaspora, such as communalism and collectiveness; the importance of extended family; the sense of obligation to the larger community and family; and the strong place of validation from family and friends. Further, they contextualize those discussions in a way that make sense and can be applied by mental health professionals. The chapter is both blunt (e.g., the impact of racial oppression on help seeking patterns; the details of the Tuskegee studies, about which everyone should be cognizant) and meaningfully

conversant, with ample examples of support systems, identity building, and helpers as guides and educators within and across communities. The differential roots of empowerment and disempowerment and their relation to the histories of slavery between U.S. and Caribbean-born Blacks augment the basics and respond to muted voices in the audience. For those who work in schools, the entire book has meaning, of course. However, specific sections will challenge daily practices. For instance, they share an excellent section on *Ebonics*, its roots, structure, context of use, and examples of misinterpretation, and talk about “cool posing” in a frank discussion appropriate for culturally-situated consultation in schools. As do several chapters, they close by proposing ways to build trust between help seekers and helpers.

Cynthia Kanoelani Kenui graciously shares “just a snapshot” (p. 107) into Hawaiian worldview in her chapter on Na Kanaka Maoli: The Indigenous People of Hawaii. Following key descriptive demographics, she is very clear in acknowledging and cautioning that for all the issues in the book, developing true depth and understanding requires us to go beyond a cognitive understanding of the history, the trauma, the worldview, and present circumstances, and listen and feel the impact with our hearts: “Most important, use your *pu’uwai*, your heart, as your guide” (p. 94). All knowledge, she says, is not taught in the same school.

Kanoelani Kenui presents a well-organized overview of the history of colonization of Hawaii, the cholera epidemic, arrest of Queen Lili’uokalani, and banning of Hawaiian language from all public and private schools. She discusses efforts to regain and revive indigenous cultural traditions, and in doing so shares these traditions, ties to the land base, and the desire to reclaim sovereignty. Her discussion of the effects of colonization and resultant trauma and mistrust, while profoundly true for Native Hawaiians, holds strong parallels for other groups as well. She ties this to cultural identity issues and to what Berry and Kim (1987, cited in Kenui) have called *bi-directional acculturation* – identification with and maintenance of the cultural characteristics of one’s own group, while maintaining relations with dominant mainstream culture.

Kanoelani Kenui’s discussion of basic values and beliefs does not just present a list or comparison chart (although there is a great chart), but a realistic discussion that is ripe with examples making accessible the Hawaiian concepts of core

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values, relationship and quality of relationship. She augments this with specific examples and suggestions for building relationships across cultures when Native Hawaiians are involved.

Douglas Haldeman and Robin Buhrke authored a chapter in which they deliver on their intent to “offer some basic information about how people come to identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual and once they do, what issues they are likely to face in their lives” (p. 145). In a very clear and readable style, they define sexual orientation, discuss the end of the mental illness model and the shift from homophobia to “sexual prejudice” and discuss mental health implications. The chapter is supported with abundant examples (e.g., people from strongly homophobic backgrounds would hold some conflicts about being gay, lesbian or bisexual, and thus feel a need to choose between their family and/or culture and their gay, lesbian or bisexual identity). Uniquely helpful for those of us working in schools, they then discuss the special risks for youth and speak to educators. Finally, they raise the important issues of multiple stereotypes in which, for example, some African Americans believe homosexuality is a “white person’s problem,” and thus make invisible gay and lesbian African Americans, leading to double potential rejection by support systems. Likewise, gay and lesbians with disabilities must face potential alienation from both communities as well as from the home, in what might otherwise have been a logical support system or identity base.

Disability as part of the diversity spectrum, both visible and invisible, deserves and has its own chapter, which is highly relevant to school psychologists. Irene Leigh and Patrick Brice provide concrete examples of accommodations and how they benefit multiple consumer groups, not just those with disabilities. As the chapter title suggests, they cover a variety of disabilities – physical, mental, mobility, and cognitive, and they point out research that psychotherapists who have even a small amount of training in disability related issues “reveal significantly less bias in case conceptualization and treatment themes” (p. 182). Leigh and Brice discuss important interactions to be considered in our work. For instance, in most families, the culture and cultural traditions of the parents are passed on to the youth, but this may be interrupted when children become part of a specific disability culture to which parents most likely do not belong (and about which they may carry

attitudes or stereotypes).

Overall, they provide a deep discussion in a small space – one that should foster the kind of debate and discourse that yields growth. They deal directly with the issue of confronting our own stereotypes and the meaning of that work. Their approach is to discuss knowing one’s own internal model – and they present several from which to choose, with implications of each! By choosing, they imply that we become cognizant of our attitudes and then can more easily become cognizant of the results of those attitudes, because our attitudes and beliefs will become the foundations of interactions with individuals with disabilities. Likewise, their section on communicating with people with disabilities carries a caveat about examining our personal beliefs.

On the whole, this book is a find. Although no book can teach sensitivity, translation into action, or the pu’uwai work of which Kanoelani Kenui speaks, it can introduce us to ways of thinking, to experiences and information to hear deeply, and concepts with which to debate. Used in conjunction with a bold and experienced facilitator and trails to additional resources and action, it can become a catalyst for growth.

One of the constructs I am left with from the book is that the issues of cultural identity are not going away with those who continue to promote melting pots and color blindness. Identity is at the core of self in the world, self in relation, self as learner and self as mediator of the future generations, and it is often found in the simple yet time honored actions of a people. Ybarra speaks of Hispanics “wanting to become part of the American tradition without losing their cultural/ethnic identity” (p. 24). Kanoelani Kenui’s discussions of Na Kanaka Maoli place cultural concepts in the Hawaiian language at the centerpiece of a very accessible discussion. And finally, Willis and Bigfoot close with a lovely iteration of generations-old practices that will continue to go on forever, reminding us of the centrality of identity:

“... Each spring, as they have done for hundreds of generations, they will come for the green corn dances; they will come for the wild onion dinners; they will come for the sacred arrow renewal; they will enter the stomp dance grounds; they will go into the forest to select the center pole for the sun dance, and they will go to carry the tree that will become the next totem of the village” (Willis & Bigfoot, p. 90).

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## Obituary

# Former Division President Winifred Scott Dies at Age 96

By Tom Fagan, Division Historian and Natasha Reeves, University of Memphis

**W**inifred Starbuck Scott, Division 16 president in 1964-1965, died on May 28, 2003 at age 96. Born on September 26, 1906, Scott received her B.A. degree in psychology in 1928 at the University of Iowa and her PhD degree in clinical psychology in 1940 at Columbia University. Her husband, Cecil Winfield Scott an educational and counseling psychologist, died in 1997. While Director of Graduate Studies at Rutgers, C. Winfield Scott hired J. Richard Wittenborn to establish Rutgers' first school psychology program in the mid-1950s (Bennett, 1985). At the time of Winifred's election to the Division presidency, she was employed with the East Orange Public Schools (NJ). She ran for the Division presidency against Stanley Marzolf (1904-1996) then at Illinois State Normal University.

According to APA directories, Winifred identified her specializations as school psychology, emotional adjustment, behavior problems, learning difficulties, testing, individual and group counseling, diagnosis and assessment. She held the ABPP in counseling psychology, and was licensed as a clinical psychologist in New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York. She became an associate member of APA in 1946, and a fellow in Divisions 16 and 17 (counseling) in 1953. She was also a fellow in Division 12 (clinical) and became a life member of APA in 1972.

She worked as the psychologist for Middletown Township Schools (NJ) from which she retired in 1977. She also maintained a private practice, and previously worked as a counselor with the Vocational Counseling Service in New Haven, CT. She served Division 16 in several areas including one

of four representatives to APA Council from 1962 to 1965, and as a member of the division's Committee on Training Standards and Certification from 1959 to 1963 (she chaired this committee from 1959 to 1961). As a member of this committee, she assisted in the development and approval of the Division's Proposals for State Department of Education Certification of School Psychologists (APA, Division 16, 1963). The effort to achieve this is described in the Division 16 Newsletter, 17(4), July 1963, p. 7.

Among those serving on committees in the year of Scott's presidency were Jack Bardon, Eli Bower, Norm Buktenica, Susan Gray, Don Ferguson, Edward French, Joe French, Gil Gredler, Rosa Hagin, Albert Harris, Walter Hodges, Frederick Lighthall, Boyd McCandless, George McCoy, T. E. Newland, Keith Perkins, Tom Ringness, William Sivers, Marie Skodak, Ralph Tindall, Gil Trachtman, and Julia Vane. That is quite a team and several are still serving the field of school psychology.

In her presidential messages in *The School Psychologist* (the division's newsletter), she spoke of the growth of the division and the tensions between the experimental and applied interests of divisions and members. One of her messages described the efforts of some groups within APA to gain stronger support and representation for those members with applied and professional psychology interests, and proposals being considered to split the APA, and deemphasize the role of its central office (Scott, 1965). The Executive Committee of Division 16 opposed such proposals and sent its position to all division presidents and the APA Board of Directors. In part it read:

The Executive Committee of the Division of

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**Former Division President Winifred Scott Dies at Age 96**

School Psychologists believes that a strong centralized APA is necessary for the maximum development of psychology, both to insure continued scientific and professional growth and to represent psychology to the general public. As psychologists first and members of a professional specialty second, we are strongly opposed to dichotomizing psychology into scientific and professional areas. As school psychologists, we are acutely aware that our effective functioning is dependent upon training that is based upon both scientific and clinical skills (p. 3).

It is of historical interest that the APA was dominated by experimental psychology and scientific interests for much of its history, despite the rapid growth of applied and professional membership and practice, especially following World War II. Professional psychologists were seeking an APA that would better represent their interests, especially in the growing arena of state and national mental health legislation. This was among the factors that in the late 1960s encouraged school psychologists to found the National Association of School Psychologists (Fagan, 1993). Ironically by the 1980s, in the perceptions of many, APA had become overly dominated by applied and professional interests that encouraged many members to found a separate, more scientifically oriented group, the American Psychological Society.

The division newsletter [1965, 19(4)] describes the division's program for the 1965 APA convention, a unique historical glimpse of the important professional topics of the period. There is also a letter to the editor calling for school psychology practice to be less directed to the individual child and more concerned with the overall context of the child's classroom, and the importance of focusing on groups of children (Kaplan, 1965). The letter reflects the still ongoing thrust of school psychology to get beyond individual child dynamics and referrals and to seek a greater contextual understanding and contribution to schooling.

Rosa Hagin, another former Division president (1971-1972) recalled Winifred Scott as very involved with school psychology's development in New Jersey and the early years of the Rutgers' program. She described Winifred and her husband as a "good team" that helped to build school psychology in New Jersey. Rosa recalled a trip in the 1960s to Russia when she and the Scotts attended the International Congress of Psychology. The meeting was held at Lenin University on the outskirts of Moscow and the

Scotts were assigned housing they considered substandard. Rosa recalled how upset they were but, of course, there was nothing that could be done about it. Joe French served on a committee during Scott's presidency but had little direct contact with her. He recalled that she had worked in schools for most of her career, but took her first psychologist employment at age 39, which was fairly common for women at that time (French, 1988, and personal communication December 22, 2003).

I never met Winifred Scott. She was president of Division 16 a year before I entered graduate school. She was then 58 years old, and I was 21. By the time I was getting established in the field, she was retiring from it. I was entrenched in the school psychology of the NASP and the Midwest, and she in that of the APA and New Jersey. Had I not seen her name in my historical work for the Division, it would not have caught my attention when the monthly list of deceased APA members was sent to me by the obituary editor of the American Psychologist. There are few in the school psychology leadership with whom I have not corresponded, met, or worked in the past 40 years. Unfortunately she is one of them.

According to a funeral home representative in North Brunswick, NJ, Winifred and her husband had no children and all final arrangements were made by a gentleman with whom they entrusted power of attorney. In the absence of offspring, and by outliving most of her colleagues and friends, much of her life and contributions to the welfare of others is easily forgotten. At least some of it is now preserved.

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**\*The division name was changed to "School Psychology" in 1969. See Fagan (1996) for a history of the division.**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Announcing the 2005 School Psychology Research Collaboration Conference

**Prepared by the 2005 SPRCC Planning Committee:**

**Shane Jimerson, Amanda VanDerHeyden, Jessica Blom-Hoffman,  
Matt Burns, Dan Reschly**

The Society for the Study of School Psychology (SSSP) is again sponsoring<sup>1</sup> the School Psychology Research Collaboration Conference (SPRCC) as a mechanism to enhance the research efforts and skills of early career researchers who conduct psychological research relevant to education and the practice of psychology in the schools. The conference is designed to facilitate multi-site research by encouraging interactions between early career researchers and senior researchers. SSSP recognizes that research on important educational and practice issues require large samples from diverse contexts to support the validity and applicability of findings across diverse populations and contexts. Collaboration among conference attendees will result in researchers being able to address complex and important problems relevant to education and the practice of psychology in the schools.

**The principal attendees** of the SPRCC will include: (1) early-career psychological researchers; (2) senior researchers (i.e., catalyst scholars) interested in mentoring early-career researchers and serving as project consultants; and (3) researchers/school systems interested in collaborating on multi-site projects. In addition, staff members from public and private research funding agencies and foundations that support psychological research relevant to education will be encouraged to participate. Catalyst scholars who participated in the 2003 SPRCC included Drs. Dick Abidin, Jean Baker, Barbara Bole-Williams, Sandy Christenson, Beth Doll, Michael Furlong, Roland Good, Patti Harrison, Tom Kratochwill, Bonnie Nastasi, Stephen Peverly, Dan Reschly, and Sylvia Rosenfield.

**Anticipated outcomes** of the SPRCC include the following: (1) early-career researchers will obtain collaborative and mentoring support for their research; (2) discussion of important issues and ideas relevant to the application of psychological research to education and the practice of psychology in the schools; (3) the development of friendships and professional relationships for diverse networks of researchers, resulting in more individuals having an outlet for their research energies and talents; (4) a constructive dialogue will be established between researchers to help establish and/or clarify research priorities; and (5) the quality of psychological research conducted and published

will be enhanced.

**Outcomes of the 2003 SPRCC** were very positive. Thirty-six early career scholars, 13 catalyst scholars, and representatives from several school districts participated in the first SPRCC. A survey completed by participants at the end of the SPRCC indicated that the conference was successful in facilitating communication, facilitating collaboration, facilitating connections and relationships, and facilitating knowledge and resources of potential funding sources. With few exceptions, early-career participants accomplished all of their personal and professional objectives for participation in the SPRCC. All 2003 SPRCC participants indicated that the conference should be organized for future early career scholars. In the fall of 2003, a survey was conducted to determine whether or not participation in the conference was followed by collaboration in scholarly activity among the participants after the conference. The survey included seven questions related to whether or not participants had communicated and collaborated in research, writing, and grant proposals. Twenty-eight (78%) of the early career scholars completed the survey and eight (62%) of the catalyst scholars completed the survey. In the early career scholar group, 64% indicated that they had communicated with other early scholars and 68% reported corresponding with catalyst scholars following the conference. Furthermore, among the early career scholars, 39% reported having collaborated in developing a research or grant proposal, 32% reported having begun a research project in collaboration with other early scholars, and 43% had collaborated in writing with other early scholars. As these responses indicate, the majority of participants corresponded following the conference, about one-third of the early scholars developed a research or grant proposal with other early scholars and collaborated across sites on a research project, and nearly half collaborated on a writing project within only 6 months of the conference.

**The 2005 SPRCC** will be a national conference, occurring on August 18th and 19th, 2005 in Washington, DC (1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. the first day and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. the second day), preceding the American Psychological Association's (APA) annual conference. The format will include presentations

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### Announcing the 2005 School Psychology Research Collaboration Conference

of interest to early scholars and emphasize focused group discussions among those with related research interests.

The conference will involve approximately 75 individuals, of whom up to 45 will be Early Career Scholars. The SSSP is currently seeking application materials from those interested in attending the conference. **Early Career Scholars are defined as:** pre-tenure scholars or post-tenure scholars who are within 2 years of having received tenure who have at least 1 peer-reviewed publication. Each applicant is required to submit his or her application materials electronically (details available below and also on-line at [www.education.ucsb.edu/sssp.sprcc](http://www.education.ucsb.edu/sssp.sprcc)).

Each applicant must provide;

- 1) A cover page indicating his/her name, current affiliation, mailing address, e-mail, phone number, and fax number.
- 2) A "personal research agenda" addressing his/her personal research interests and course of action during the next 3-5 years. This research agenda should provide a broad overview of the area(s) of interest, previous efforts in this area, specific questions to be addressed through the proposed research agenda, and specific implications for the practice of psychology in the schools. The personal research agenda is to be double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins, and is not to exceed 2 pages (if citations are included, references may appear on a third page).
- 3) A proposal of up to 3 pages outlining his/her vision of a collaborative multi-site research program consistent with his/her "personal research agenda." Please identify the specific issue(s) and question(s) to be addressed, the necessary context and participants required to address the question(s), an estimate of the requisite number of participants, an estimate of the budget necessary to accomplish this research, and the relative advantages and challenges of a collaborative multi-site research program to address the question(s). This proposal is to be double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins, and is not to exceed 3 pages (references may appear on a fourth page). Also, be certain to include a brief abstract (no more than 300 words) of the proposal on a separate page.
- 4) A letter of support from his or her department chair or unit head reflecting on the skills of the applicant to engage in the proposed research agenda.
- 5) A Personal Vitae

**The deadline for submission of the above materials is August 5, 2004.** Early Career Scholars will be selected to participate from those submitting complete materials by the deadline. Participants will be notified by

November 1, 2004. Early Career Scholar participants will be provided a \$400 stipend to facilitate their attendance. They will also have an opportunity to submit a proposal to the SSSP small grants program to secure research funds to develop a competitive proposal for a large scale-collaborative research project. Please direct questions regarding the conference to Dr. Shane Jimerson at [jjimerson@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:jjimerson@education.ucsb.edu) or Dr. Amanda VanDerHeyden at [vanderheydena@vail.k12.az.us](mailto:vanderheydena@vail.k12.az.us). Application materials are to be submitted electronically via e-mail to:

Shane Jimerson, Ph.D. and Amanda VanDerHeyden, Ph.D.  
Co-Chairs, SSSP 2005 SPRCC Planning Committee  
[Jimerson@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:Jimerson@education.ucsb.edu) and  
[vanderheydena@vail.k12.az.us](mailto:vanderheydena@vail.k12.az.us)

<sup>1</sup> SSSP provides leadership and resources in preparing for the SPRCC. It is important to note that the 2003 SPRCC was co-sponsored by; *Society for the Study of School Psychology National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) American Psychological Association (APA) - Division 16 School Psychology American Psychological Association (APA) - Education Directorate Elsevier Science, Inc. - ScienceDirect* and their co-sponsorship is anticipated for the 2005 SPRCC.

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### The Validity of the Graduate Record Examination in Predicting School Psychology Graduate Program Outcomes: A Conditional Probability Analysis

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**Student Affiliates of School Psychology (SASP)**

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## Why Connect Family and School Contexts?

John Eagle, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**P**ublic schools use a variety of models to make connections between a child's school and home environments. These different models fall along a continuum dependent upon degrees of interaction, collaboration and focus. Within the literature there are several different descriptions of these continuums. Epstein (1996) proposed six types of family involvement that fall along a continuum (low to high): parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Christenson and Godber (2001) discussed a continuum (low to high) consisting of parent-involvement, family-school partnerships, family support, and family-centered services. And, Trivette, Dunst, Boyd, and Handby (1995) described the following continuum (low to high): professionally-centered, family-allied, family-focused, and family-centered. Despite differences in form and terminology, the goals of all models are "to enhance success for students and to improve

learning opportunities and outcomes for children and youth, including those that are academic, social, and behavioral in nature" (Christenson & Godber, 2001, p.455).

There are four main rationales for the adoption of all different types of home-school connection programs by public schools, ranging from parent involvement programs to family-centered services. These reasons include a) the socialization and development of children, b) federal legislation, c) the need to support diverse populations, and d) improving current levels of student achievement.

### **SOCIALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN**

One rationale for establishing effective home-school connections is that both environments are essential to the

socialization and development of a child (Adams & Christenson, 2000). While both school and home contexts comprise the primary environments in which a child exists, parents control 87% of a child's waking hours (Walberg, 1984). Thus, the potential benefits for enhancing the mesosystemic connections of a child's ecology (Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996) has played a large role in the developing rationale for family school connections. Pianta and Walsh (1996) referred to the family, child, and school as the "invidious triangle." Accordingly, considerations for a child's development must account for the reciprocal relationships between the child, family, and school contexts.

Families also grant a child an informal education that is considered a prerequisite for successful experiences in the classroom (Adams & Christenson, 2000). While the school environment sets up developmental tasks for students, the family serves as an important resource for the acquisition of these developmental tasks (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Parents are providers of linguistic and social capital (Clark, 1988), as well as provide opportunities and learning experiences. Conoley (1987) stated that schools and families share similar ways of socializing a child, through support, teaching, nurturing, punishment, rewards, and evaluation. Parents are also responsible for the "curriculum of the home" that is an essential component to a child's educational development in school (Walberg, 1984).

### **FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

Parents have been considered an integral component in the identification, evaluation, and program development for children suspected of having special needs, ever since the initial passing of special education law. In 1975, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) established the foundations for parental involvement in the special education process. Public Law 99-457, in 1986, instituted the individualized family service plan (IFSP), which stated that

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services should be based within the context of the family not just the child. This reiterated the importance of including parents and families in the special education process. More recently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) established specific regulations for establishing parents as partners with school-based teams and increasing parental responsibility throughout the process.

However, federal legislative support for parental involvement is not limited to the special education process. The relationship between families and schools has become a focus of national education reform and has been explicitly emphasized in two national education goals: Goals 1 and 8 (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, P.L. 103-227). Additionally, in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Within this legislation Local Education Agencies are required to take certain steps in order “to ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement” (P.L. 107-111, §1118). Further, it stipulated that Local Education Agencies shall assist school personnel “reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school” (P.L. 107-111, § 1118).

**SUPPORTING DIVERSE POPULATIONS**

A third rationale for the development of effective family-school connections is the need to support students from diverse populations. Increasingly, schools are working with students from different backgrounds. Children being served by schools often differ from their teachers and school administration on a variety of levels. These often include differences in culture, ethnicity, linguistic background, family-structure, and socio-economic status. As a result, schools need to be able to develop effective ways for supporting children while being sensitive to different diversities (Salend & Taylor, 1993). “Culture is seen not as a set of shared rules but as constantly changing transactional relations and understandings and is perhaps best thought of as constantly changing and ambiguous shared text, which one must continually

interpret” (Pianta & Walsh, 1996, p. 72). Parental involvement not only allows the family to provide additional, essential information about their child, but it also infuses the culture and values of the family into the school (Scott-Jones, 1988).

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

One of the more prolific rationales in the literature for home-school connections pertains to student learning and achievement in school. National statistic reports indicate that too many students are performing poorly in school (Swap, 1993). It is estimated that 20-30% of students in the United States are having difficulty acquiring academic skills (Levin, 1987). Researchers have used academic benefits, such as: a) higher achievement scores, b) higher grades, c) increase in attendance, d) reduction of student dropouts, f) improved motivation, and g) positive attitudes, as a rationale for home-school partnerships (Chavkin, & Williams, 1988; Henderson, 1988). However, while an increase in student learning and achievement, through effective home-school connections is both empirically and theoretically supported (Pianta & Walsh, 1996), the results of empirical studies have yet to fully clarify the nature of the relationship (Christenson & Godber, 2001).

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# People & Places

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- **Linda Caterino** announces that the Psy.D. Program in School Psychology at **Argosy University/Phoenix** admitted its first class of 10 students. Four more students joined the program this spring. The School Psychology Program endorses a practitioner-scholar model. It requires 90 hours of coursework, two 500 hour practica, a year-long internship and a research project.
- During the second and third year of their graduate program, students complete two practicum experiences with local psychologists who are both licensed and school certified. The practicum experience may be taken in a traditional or non-traditional school setting or in a mental health clinic, residential treatment, medical setting, etc. At **Argosy**, students have the opportunity to become involved in various research projects. Recent research topics have included work on ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Asperger's Syndrome, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury in children, development of a drop-out prevention program, and the development of an adolescent temperament scale.
- The **Argosy** is directed by **Linda C. Caterino, Ph.D., ABPP**. Graduate courses are taught by Dr. Caterino and 10 core faculty members, as well as adjunct professors from the community who bring particular expertise to the program. Advisory Board Members include: **Ronald Palomares, Ph.D.; Dan Miller, Ph.D.; Mary Arredondo, Ph.D.; Kytja Voeller, M.D.; Marilyn Martin, Ph.D.;**
- **Jeanne Hunt, Ph.D.; Wayne Holtzman, Ph.D.; Ronald Davis, Ph.D., ABPP; and Steven Shively, Ph.D.**
- **David S. Goh, Ph.D.**, from **City University of New York at Queens College**, has recently finished a new book entitled *Assessment Accommodations for Diverse Learners* (Allyn and Bacon).
- **Jeff Braden, Ph.D.**, from **North Carolina State University**, has been named to APA's Board of Scientific Affairs (BSA) to serve a 2 year term on APA's Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment (CPTA) (2004-06).
- **Linda C. Caterino, Ph.D., ABPP** of **Argosy University/Phoenix** was named the 2003 recipient of the Arizona Psychological Association Faculty Member of the Year. She also received a commendation from the Governor of Arizona and is the President-elect of the Academy of School Psychology.
- **Jerome M. Sattler** received an honorary Doctor of Science from Central Missouri State University on Dec. 12, 2003. The ceremony took place in Warrensburg, MO during the commencement for graduate students.

Please e-mail all submissions to:  
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