

From Science to Practice

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FEATURED ARTICLE

Considerations for adapting a group CBT anger coping program to Native American school populations

Adapting to the cultural needs of Native American students may increase the effectiveness of anger coping programs.

By [Jeffrey D. Shahidullah](#)

Abstract

There is a critical need for evidence-based mental health interventions for American Indian and Native American (AI/NA) youth as myriad risk factors in this population increase the likelihood for antisocial behavior and disruptive behavior disorders. With the paucity of empirical studies focused on addressing problem solving for coping skills in AI/NA schoolchildren, there is a need for the selection and adaptation of existing evidence-based anger coping interventions to be implemented and rigorously researched. One research-based school intervention for angry and aggressive behaviors is the *Anger Coping Program* (ACP; Larson & Lochman, 2011). This paper explores considerations for a culturally-adapted ACP to be delivered in AI/NA schools. First, the unique needs of the target population are examined and juxtaposed with the specific methods and goals of ACP. Next, the research evidence for ACPs effectiveness on both the standardized population as well as for use with diverse populations is provided. Finally, an overview of the necessary adaptations, as put forth by the empirical literature is provided. Taken together this analysis of an adapted-ACP for use with AI/NA school children, may inform future research and practice in the intervention of angry and aggressive behaviors in a clinically-indicated, yet traditionally underserved population.

Keywords: American Indian youth, Native American youth, mental health interventions, anger, school

There is a critical need for evidence-based mental health interventions for American Indian and Native American (herein referred to as AI/NA) school children as myriad risk factors in these populations increase the likelihood for antisocial behavior and disruptive behavior disorders (Dicken & Rutherford, 2005; Whitbeck, Yu, Johnson, Hoyt, & Walls, 2008). With the exception of a notable few (e.g., *Families and Schools Together* [FAST]; Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demaray, 2004; *First Step to Success*;

Walker, Stiller, Golly, Kavanagh, Severson, & Feil, 1997), empirical studies focusing primarily on addressing problem solving for coping skills conducted with AI/NA school children are nonexistent. The majority of evidence-based interventions for AI/NA youth are focused primarily on substance abuse and suicide prevention (Jackson & Hodge, 2010). There is a clear need for the selection and adaptation of existing evidence-based anger coping interventions to be implemented and rigorously researched in AI/NA school populations. One research-based school intervention for angry and aggressive behaviors is the *Anger Coping Program* (ACP; Larson & Lochman, 2011). ACP is a group-based, cognitive-behavioral intervention that addresses key deficits that children display in effectively coping with anger through developing physiological and emotional awareness and fostering social problem-solving skills, perspective taking and attribution retraining (Lochman, Nelson, & Sims, 1981).

This paper explores considerations for a culturally-adapted ACP to be delivered in AI/NA schools. First, the unique needs of the target population are examined and juxtaposed with the specific methods and goals of ACP. Next, the research evidence for ACPs effectiveness on both the standardized population as well as for use with diverse populations is provided. Finally, an overview of the necessary adaptations, as put forth by the empirical literature is provided. Taken together this analysis of an adapted-ACP for use with AI/NA school children, may inform future research and practice in the intervention of angry and aggressive behaviors in a clinically-indicated, yet traditionally underserved population.

Meeting needs of AI/NA youth

Despite a paucity of mental health and intervention research in AI/NA youth, the existing data provides cause for alarm. While most research looks at the increased rate of alcohol abuse and suicide in AI/NA youth (May & Moran, 1995), other research clearly shows that mental health disorders are associated with these problems (Beals et al., 1997). Additionally, depression and conduct disorder are indicated risk factors for these negative outcomes (Dinges & Doung-Tran, 1993; Grossman, Milligan, & Deyo, 1991). The prevalence of anger and aggression in AI/NA youth supports the need for early and effective intervention. Without effective coping strategies, youth often rely on maladaptive practices such as substance use to mask these angry feelings. Also, without early intervention, these angry and aggressive behaviors in childhood may likely form into violent and other aggressive acts such domestic violence, which Fletcher (2009) describes as an “epidemic” in AI/NA populations, and suicide. The alarming rate of suicide stands as the most striking single indicator of the need for effective mental health service delivery for this population. The suicide rate of AI/NA male youth is 2 to 3 times higher than that of the general population (Mock, Grossman, Mulder, Stewart, & Koepsall, 1996).

There are a number of other striking risk factors that exacerbate the problems of AI/NA youth such as their being the most impoverished minority group in the United States, being overrepresented among people who are homeless, coming from families with members who are incarcerated, high rates of being in foster care, coming from families with substance addictions, and subsequently high birth rates with fetal alcohol

syndrome, fetal alcohol effects, cognitive impairments, and a host of other health impairments (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2001). Despite the overwhelming level of indicated mental health needs, these populations are traditionally underserved as a result of a lack of access to effective providers and a lack of empirically-supported treatments for use in AI/NA youth. With the appropriate adaptations and implementation procedures it appears that ACP can potentially be a helpful intervention for intervening with early aggressive behaviors, which is a risk factor for early substance abuse, a demonstrated problem in many AI/NA populations (Coie, Terry, Zakriski, & Lochman, 1995; Lochman & Wayland, 1994). Integrating this empirically-supported intervention into the cultural context of an AI/NA school can be the necessary first step in measuring its effectiveness for use in this population of youth.

Anger coping program description

Overview

The *Anger Coping Program* is a cognitive-behavioral counseling intervention designed to meet the needs of students in grades 3-7 through pull-out small-group skills training over 18 weekly sessions. Typically, it is used in the context of a Level 2 response to intervention (RTI) or positive behavioral intervention and supports (PBIS) framework (selected prevention measures) for children that have been unresponsive to both Level 1 universal supports and Level 2 classroom-based behavioral supports. Specifically, it addresses students with problematic levels of anger and aggressive behavior which disrupt the safety and learning environment for themselves and peers.

Conceptualization of mental health

Angry and aggressive students often demonstrate a variety of deficits or distortions in their processing of social information, thus contributing to difficulties in social competence (Lochman & Wells, 1996). ACP was developed from the *social information-processing model* (i.e., *social cognitive model*) developed by Crick and Dodge (1994) which emphasizes the role of cognition in how children process social information within six sequential steps: (1) encoding social cues, (2) interpreting these cues, (3) identifying social goals, (4) generating possible solutions to the perceived problem, (5) evaluating these solutions, and (6) enacting the chosen solution. Research indicates that aggressive children display difficulties at the first two steps (i.e., cognitive processing of the problem event) and steps 4 and 5 (i.e., cognitive processing of the responses) (Larson & Lochman, 2011). These processing deficits (i.e., cognitive distortions) often result in selectively recalling and attending to hostile rather than neutral interpersonal cues (Gouze, 1987; Milich & Dodge, 1984). These misinterpreted cues often elicit hostile attribution biases, whereby students under-perceive their own situational influence, aggressive behaviors, and responsibility for conflict (Guerra & Slaby, 1989) and over-perceive the aggressive actions of others. This social cognitive model of anger arousal provides the empirical foundation for understanding angry and aggressive behaviors in youth (Lochman, Powell, Whidby, & Fitzgerald, 2006). It is theorized that the group setting is most effective for intervening in these types of emotional and behavioral responses by 1) allowing children to receive peer feedback, 2) providing in-

vivo experiential learning, and 3) increasing the likelihood of skill generalization (Lochman, Burch, Curry, & Lampron, 1984).

Methods and goals

ACPs social-cognitive framework stresses the importance of the initial appraisal of the problem situation, problem solutions, elicited physiological arousal, and the behavioral response. The goal of ACP is to demonstrate the role that labeling emotions, thought processes, and schemas can have in determining what student's process. It accomplishes this by facilitating anger management, physiological, and emotional awareness, perspective training and attribution retraining, and social problem solving. The groups are co-led by a trained teacher, counselor, and/or school psychologist in the school setting. Weekly sessions of roughly 45 minutes focus on teaching the principles of individual perceptual processes. Additionally, each session incorporates goal setting, role playing, video modeling, practicing effective problem-solving strategies, exploring self-statements, recognizing early signs of emotional and physiological anger arousal, generation of possible solutions, linking choices with consequences, intervening in anger arousal through self-talk, relaxation, distraction strategies, discussions, and debriefing. The ACP utilizes a contingency-based reward system to facilitate participation and involvement. Teachers and school staff are actively involved in the goal setting process and are expected to look for and reinforce pro-social behaviors that ACP participants develop. Additionally, teachers provide weekly feedback and progress updates to inform the intervention content and the emphasis of weekly sessions.

Effectiveness research

Cognitive problem-solving skills training has been labeled a "promising treatment" for children with externalizing behavior problems as it has shown significant improvement in reductions of aggressive and antisocial behavior (Kazdin & Weisz, 1998). Results from two task forces on effective psychosocial interventions, Brestan and Eyberg (1998) and Eyberg, Nelson, and Boggs (2008) found that ACP was a promising cognitive-behavioral intervention for children with angry and aggressive behaviors. Further, in a meta-analysis of anger management programs for school age youth, Smith, Larson, DeBaryshe, and Salzman (2000) concluded that ACP was among the few programs possessing both strong design and empirical evidence.

Thus far, ACP has been implemented and evaluated in samples of predominantly Caucasian and African American youth, and within these samples, the results of efficacy and effectiveness research have not found race as a moderating variable (Larson & Lochman, 2011). This suggests that the underlying source of change (e.g., social cognitive factors) in which ACP is grounded is similar across these groups.

Of course, no matter how effective ACP appears to be, implementers must always use caution when endorsing interventions that have not been tested in certain populations. For example, the cognitive-behavioral orientation of ACP may be subject to specific cultural restraints (e.g., SES, race, cultural context) as Lochman, Whidby, and Fitzgerald (2000) indicate that cognitive-behavioral approaches that aim to change social cognitive

deficits and distortions in aggressive children and adolescents may be less effective in certain cultural backgrounds.

While research on AI/NA school children are largely missing from the research database, the existing research with these youth using cognitive-behavioral approaches (Schinke, Tepavac, & Cole, 2000) and focusing on problem-solving skills through a social cognitive orientation (LaFromboise & Howard-Pitney, 1995) reveal that these youth engage in and benefit from these interventions when they are offered in the school. For example, Diken and Rutherford (2005) implemented *First Step to Success* (Walker et al., 1997) with four Native American school children to address early onset antisocial behavior and found that it had a significant positive effect on student's social play behaviors, while decreasing nonsocial behaviors.

Similar studies are needed to evaluate ACPs effectiveness in this population as small scale implementation and evaluation within reservation-based schools may be a critical first step in obtaining preliminary data to inform and provide necessary adaptations for future interventions. While many tribal groups will be assimilated into mainstream culture and be comfortable with the standardized intervention, others will hold more traditional views to healing. Therefore, ACPs use in specific AI/NA groups will not garner the empirical support for its widespread use in all AI/NA groups as the success of each implementation will likely vary according to the acculturation of each group. To account for the varied levels of acculturation and views toward healing, unique cultural adaptations may be needed with each implementation.

Adapting to the needs of AI/NA populations

In the following sections we discuss the need for cultural adaptations in AI/NA populations in general without listing concrete examples as vast heterogeneity exists among various tribal groups. Effective mental health interventions for use in this population must be provided in the cultural and ecological context of AI/NAs nuanced therapeutic paradigms. Because various AI/NA cultures are unique, specific adaptations will require close collaboration with local community partners for effective and efficient development and integration. Close collaboration with tribal or community stakeholders will help intervention developers acknowledge that needs will be unique based upon the tribe, community, and school, and so, it is important to assess these unique needs through focus groups with the target population and key community stakeholders to understand unique risk and protective factors.

To determine what, if any, adaptations should be made, it is helpful to utilize an intervention adaptation process framework. In drawing from Rogers' (2000) *diffusions of innovations framework*, Domenech, Rodriguez, and Wieling (2004) outline a three-phase Cultural Adaptation Process Model. Phase one involves determining the needs of the community through a collaborative process with key community leaders. Phase two involves the selection and adaptation of evaluation measures, soliciting input from community members, and pilot testing. Phase three integrates the lessons learned from the previous phase into a revised intervention through continued collaboration with community stakeholders. By identifying and utilizing local topical experts to assist in the

adaptation, intervention developers attempt to appropriately incorporate cultural changes to the surface structure (and possibly deep structure), while maintaining fidelity to core elements.

Considerations based on evidence from the AI/NA literature

Motivation for change

A primary moderating variable in the potential success of this intervention will be the level of acculturation the group has to the dominant culture. For many Indian groups, the intervention format using social-cognitive principles, group discussions, and sharing may not be the most effective as participants may question their own abilities to facilitate change. For example, DuBray (1992) explains the endorsement of a “being” rather than a “doing” philosophy of life. This “doing” philosophy assumes that individuals’ ability to change is predicated on the achievement of measurable standards perceived to be external to the scope of influence that an individual has. Therefore, many AI/NA ascribe to a “being” philosophy of life whereby circumstances are inherently predetermined and in which an individual has limited control over a host of external determinants. The pressures of “doing” in order to align with expectations of a school code of conduct or population-based mental health or behavioral initiative, may be incongruent with cultural views. Also, in many AI/NA cultures, such as that of the Navajo, AI/NA emphasis on the sequence of time is present, past, and future, in that order. For these individuals, plans are not made for the future as the belief is that this domain is out of one’s control, and so, to plan as if one has the ability to alter, change, or predict the future is futile (Purnell & Paulanka, 2005).

Cultural styles of expression

The intervention implementers must be sensitive to cultural styles of expression in order to avoid miscommunications. As AI/NA typically do not share inner feelings with those outside their group, tribe, or clan, it may take the interventionist extra time to build rapport and trust (Purnell & Paulanka, 2005). Also, it is important to consider that preferred manners and behavioral expectations are often modeled by parents at an early age without extensive verbal communication (DuBray, 1993). This reliance on non-verbal signals is often permeated through the culture from indicating approval or disapproval from parents or teachers. Developing the focus on understanding AI students through body language can not only inform the content of focus within intervention, but also indicate participant’s acceptance of or resistance to the proposed intervention (Sue & Sue, 1990). ACPs focus on understanding nonverbal signals may make it conducive to use in this group. Also, ACPs flexibility in implementation and program design make it amenable to varied participant groups. With familiarity of the manual, group leaders are encouraged to use their clinical judgment when making cultural adaptations. Rather than the use of “scripts” that explicitly dictate what leaders should say or participants should do, the use of general objectives and training guidelines allow ACP to be individualized to fit the needs of the group.

Individual and collective strengths of native community

It is important to not focus solely on the risk factors in this population, without fully acknowledging the unique protective factors of the AI/NA community (e.g., collectivistic, resiliency, orientation to nature, resourcefulness, wisdom of family/tribal leaders). By noting these factors it can facilitate the process of developing a strengths-based approach in order to integrate these principles into the intervention plan. Given the collectivistic family and community orientation that many AI/NA groups possess, an empirically-supported approach used in many mental health service deliveries to AI/NAs is family-systems theory (DuBray & Sanders, 1999). The premise of this theory is that the entire family structure is intimately connected with interplay between factors that affect one individual reverberating to the entire family. It recognizes the view that the child is a critical component of this interrelated system. Problems in school and with ineffectively managing angry and aggressive impulses will not only lead to future maladaptive outcomes but will negatively affect the entire family. Obtaining buy-in from the family may likely dictate the willingness of the child to succeed in ACP.

Contribution of traditional healing practices

For interventions to be successful, Western-based mental health practices must be integrated into the culture rather than the reverse (adding culture to the EBP). LaFramboise, Trimble, and Mohatt (1990) espoused the importance of providing culturally competent mental health interventions to these populations by recognizing, respecting, and facilitating the integration of “traditional treatments” with conventional psychotherapeutic services in a manner that is theoretically aligned with Native traditions. Because of AI/NAs emphasis on spirituality, an adapted intervention approach that blends elements of mind, body, and spirit may be necessary and contribute to a holistic approach to intervention. An expert panel from the IHS/SAMHSA National Behavioral Health Conference on American Indian and Alaska Native Best Practices in Behavioral Health (2008) put forth the following summative recommendations: community accepted healing approaches; evaluation of the practice-based evidence and “certification” of the provider by the community; honor family choice for support system, spiritual, extended family, tribal, IHS, or mainstream programs and churches for increased anonymity; staff training to emphasize strength-based assessments & treatment planning & inclusion of cultural supports; and use of native language to reinforce value of wellness.

Conclusion

The social-cognitive model that guides the targeted goals for ACP provides an empirically strong framework, while also allowing the flexibility for adaptations needed to address specific cognitive-deficits and strengths of particular populations. Though the utility and transportability of ACP into a rural Native American school for use with angry and aggressive children is highly dependent on the participants’ level of acculturation to Western perspectives on mental health, ACP does appear promising. Its inherent focus on having multiple stakeholders involved is easily conducive to a family-systems approach whereby, the children’s families, communities, and local topical experts can have a voice in both the goals and format for intervention.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to volume 6 of FSTP

The mission of the newsletter stays the same in 2013, abetted by a new award for best student research manuscript.

Welcome to a new year for *School Psychology: From Science to Practice (FSTP)*. As in years past, this publication offers students an outlet for publishing relevant articles related to school psychology as well as a venue for conveying news from the Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP), the student-led organization of the School Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association (APA Div. 16). We welcome and encourage graduate students, faculty, and practitioners to submit relevant content for inclusion in this publication. For information about manuscript types considered for publication, visit *FSTP* on the Web. Thank you.

Announcing the Student Research Award

Beginning this year SASP will be awarding a \$75 cash prize for the most outstanding student research manuscript accepted for publication in *FSTP*. The prize will be awarded subsequent to publication of the winter 2014 issue. The winning manuscript will be selected based on the following criteria as determined by a panel of experts:

- Potential for increasing the well-being of children by advancing the field of school psychology.
- Degree to which the research and/or findings add to extant evidence-based literature.
- Practical applicability for school psychologists (i.e., potential for bringing science to practice).
- Quality and fit of research design (i.e., statistical methodology, analysis, interpretation).
- Quality, clarity, and completeness of the manuscript (i.e., readability, grammar, punctuation, references, structure, adherence to FSTP guidelines).

IN THIS ISSUE

Message from the president

SASP efforts for 2013 include strengthening the bond with Div. 16, expanding the website, increasing diversity efforts, and advocating for grad students.

By [Jennifer M. Cooper](#)

Greetings SASP Members!

As the 2013 SASP president, I want to take time to thank the 2012 SASP Executive Board. This past year has brought about many successful ventures including our transition to Div. 16's website, the launch of our new diversity mentorship program, and the SASP/Div. 16 membership merger. I was honored and humbled to work with such an outstanding group of individuals. Without each of you, our current board would not be continuing into such a robust student organization. The entire SASP board contributed to the evolving success of SASP, and I cannot speak highly enough to each of your abilities. On behalf of the current board, we wish you the best in your future endeavors and know all of you will continue to flourish as professionals and leaders in the field of school psychology.

I would also like to thank everyone who participated in the 2013 SASP Executive Board elections this year. The 2013 elections proved to be one of the best turnouts for SASP nominations in recent years. There were many qualified individuals who submitted nominations from across the country. SASP was eager to see the potential leadership that our field has to offer in the years to come. We were also happy to see how many of you participated by voting for your favorite candidate. Our overall poll numbers were great, and made for an exciting election. To get to know your 2013 SASP executive board better, visit our Website to read their full biographies.

In 2013, SASP will be focused on building upon the successful initiatives of 2012 including, but not limited to, the following:

- strengthening our relationship with our supporting organization, Div. 16, who makes all of SASP's efforts possible;
- developing the website into a viable resource for our Division 16 student affiliate members;
- contributing to diversity efforts within school psychology through our Diversity Mentoring Program; and
- representing the voices of graduate students as three of SASP's current/former leaders serve as representatives for the Futures development teams (an outgrowth of the 2012 Futures Conference).

In addition to these exciting efforts, the 2013 board has eagerly started new initiatives and is off to a remarkable start!

Currently, SASP is working with Div. 16 convention leaders to plan the 2013 Student Research Forum (SRF) at the Annual APA Convention to be held in Honolulu July 31–Aug 4, 2013. Please be sure to check out our website and Listserv announcements to stay up-to-date on the day/time for the SRF, how to submit a poster proposal, and information about the notable keynote speaker and other program details. In addition, a diversity committee was created in early 2013 to assist in our efforts to expand the diversity mentoring program, reach out to diverse school psychology graduate students, and improve diversity programming at convention.

To foster the professional development of our members, SASP is also working to evolve our From Science to Practice (FSTP) newsletter into a premier student-edited publication outlet. We plan to do so by featuring several new sections intended to expand the scope of FSTP. Included will be offerings from early-career and seasoned faculty members, as well as interviews with notable researchers in the field. As an additional professional development outlet, SASP is working with Div. 16 to provide training opportunities for our members on various topics, the first of which will focus on preparing students for careers in academia.

Finally, this year, SASP will introduce two new student awards as a means of increasing our student recognition efforts and contributing to the professional growth and development of school psychology student leaders from across the United States. The Student Research Article Award will be given to one student who authors an outstanding FSTP research article in 2013. The Diversity Mentoring Mentee Award will be conferred on one student who makes lasting contributions to diversity within the field of school psychology through participation in the diversity mentoring program for 2013.

To advocate for our members, by addressing the imbalance of school psychology internship opportunities, SASP will continue to share resources including those reprinted in this issue. Thus, be on the lookout for an article authored by SASP leaders that will address this critical topic in an upcoming issue of Div. 16's *The School Psychologist*.

As president, my goal is to represent and address the diverse needs of graduate students from across the country and promote opportunities for student participation, advocacy efforts, professional development and leadership roles as we work together toward shaping the future of school psychology. I encourage SASP members to [email me](#) at any time throughout the year with input regarding how we can better serve our members and make lasting student contributions to the field of school psychology. I am honored to continue my service to SASP and Div. 16, and I look forward to hearing from you!

Jennifer Cooper
2013 SASP president

IN THIS ISSUE

SASP at NASP 2013: a recap

Outreach at the NASP convention let SASP staffers connect with both student and school-psychology professionals.

By [Caitlin V. Hynes](#)

At the NASP Convention in February, SASP board members had the opportunity to meet and recruit new members at APA Division 16's booth in the exhibition hall. Interested students and faculty had the opportunity to talk to board members about what Division 16 and SASP have to offer and were encouraged to promote membership within their programs. This year we were able to recruit more than 50 new student affiliates, including students from 15 programs that do not yet have active SASP chapters.

Being able to work at the Division 16 booth was an extremely rewarding experience for me personally. As Membership Chair, it was thrilling to have the opportunity to connect with students from other programs, some of whom I had communicated with through emails in the past. It was particularly interesting to hear what students' perceptions of SASP are and their current level of involvement. There were many students who came from programs with active chapters, but for others this was the first exposure to SASP. Those of us staffing the booth were happy to share our own experiences and provide prospective members with materials highlighting the benefits of membership.

As one of my goals for this year is to promote increased student involvement on the national level as well as collaboration between programs, it was extremely helpful for me to have the opportunity to solicit feedback and listen to ideas that students wanted to share. One of my favorite moments was when I was in the middle of a discussion with a student about how to start a SASP chapter at her program when another student joined the conversation with stories of successful events that his chapter had held. The two struck up a conversation and exchanged contact information so that they could continue to discuss ideas for their respective programs. In a profession where it is all about relationships and networking, it is a privilege to be able to encourage and facilitate the development of these interactions between students.

Overall, this year's NASP Convention was a great success for SASP, and I was happy to be able to participate. I would like offer a warm welcome to our new members on behalf of the 2013 SASP Executive Board and encourage all of our members to stay involved by submitting to FSTP, joining our listserv, and contacting our board members with ideas or input. I encourage anyone with questions about membership, starting a chapter, or about SASP in general, to [email me](#) for further information. Members are also encouraged to submit a poster proposal for the 2013 Student Research Forum at the upcoming Annual APA Convention (July 31-Aug. 4, 2013). We hope to see you all in Honolulu!

Diversity mentorship program spotlight

Mentoring connection brings together a doctoral student in Arkansas and a professor in Chicago.

By [Kennetha Frye, MS](#)

Hi SASP members,

I hope all is well. In this issue of *FSTP* we included another mentor/mentee spotlight to highlight for current SASP members, the benefits of having a SASP diversity mentor. This issue's mentor/mentee pair is Dr. Dave Shriberg and Michael Watson. Both have been members of the program since January. Michael is a third-year doctoral student in the school psychology program at the University of Central Arkansas and has interests in intervention/prevention and emotional disturbance. Shriberg is an associate professor at Loyola University-Chicago. His research interests focus on diversity and social justice issues, school-family-community collaboration, and combating bullying. Shriberg also serves on the APA Div. 16 executive committee and is a member of the Social Justice and Child Rights Div, 16 working group. Please see below for their story.

From Michael Watson

What have you enjoyed most about the mentor/mentee experience?

The mentor experience has provided me with an opportunity to learn from one of the major contributors to social justice within the field of school psychology. Dr. David Shriberg has planted a seed in my mind that is beginning to grow in the area of social justice regarding how we as school psychologists can contribute by encouraging individuals to step outside their comfort zones and speak out against injustice in our schools and our communities. Our work with individuals from diverse backgrounds places us on the front line of demonstrating the most effective ways of working with everyone. Therefore, we must always try to put our best foot forward when we are acting as ambassadors and advocates in the various settings we are part of.

What topics with regard to diversity have you discussed with your mentor?

With regard to diversity, our conversation addressed an actual presentation Dr. Shriberg gave entitled "Social Justice in the Field of School Psychology." It was interesting to hear the perspective of a person, from a background totally different than mine, express the same concerns I have about the field as it relates to diversity. The most important lesson I have learned from Dr. Shriberg is the necessity of, first, admitting there is a problem and, second, taking action to redress it. Pertaining to school psychology, we must promote and encourage diversity to increase our knowledge of what we view as average or typical.

Do you plan to collaborate on any research projects with your mentor?

We have not discussed any research projects, but I plan to hang on to Dr. Shriberg's coattails as he promotes social justice within the field of school psychology.

From Dr. Dave Shriberg

What is your opinion on the future of multiculturalism within the field of school psychology?

I think this is an open question. On the one hand, I think you will see the emergence of incredible people like Michael who represent the next generation of talent in the field. It may be just that I have become more aware of this group, but it seems to me that since first entering the field in 1997 more and more students, practitioners, supervisors, and professors are attuned to multiculturalism and view it as only natural and appropriate that school psychologists should strive to be as culturally responsive as possible. So, this is a positive development.

On the other hand, the field remains incredibly nondiverse by almost any measure, very out of step with U.S. demographics, not to mention the world. Although as a white heterosexual male I certainly would be the first to speak to the responsibility we all have to be allies when we are in a position of privilege, if the field continues to be so disproportionately out of step demographically, it is hard for me to see how multicultural school psychology can achieve its potential. This is one reason why I see mentorship as so important — we cannot afford to lose even one talented student who brings something important to the table when it comes to multicultural school psychology.

However, for the field to have a positive future when it comes to multicultural school psychology, there needs to be a critical examination at the local, state, national, and international level not only of the positives, but of ways in which the field may be falling short. In what ways has school psychology historically and in the present supported injustice, even if unintentionally? What barriers are there to progress in multicultural school psychology? While many, many individuals think about this, I don't see a kind of focused attention on what Paulo Friere labeled praxis—reflection and action upon the world in order to change it—within the field. I am proud to be a school psychologist, but I think we tend to spend too much time patting ourselves on the back and not enough time thinking about ways the field can be improved when it comes to multicultural school psychology. A healthy field is not afraid to look critically at itself and to ask the tough questions. For example, is the expansion of school psychology across the globe leading to the importation of white, male, Christian, heterosexist, Western privilege, or will school psychology be able to adapt to the needs and values of different cultures and countries? I do not claim to have a full answer to this kind of question, but I do feel that these are the kinds of questions that will need to be asked for multicultural school psychology to achieve its potential. Finally, I think we need to realize that while it is our job as school psychologists to pose these kinds of questions, we have to realize that we are not the ones who have all the answers. For example, I think one way to answer these kinds of questions is to understand better whether persons from all backgrounds

who experience school psychologists in the U.S. and abroad are more likely to say that school psychology is being done *to* them or *with* them. If it's the second, then I am more optimistic about the future of multicultural school psychology.

What comes to mind when you reflect on this mentorship experience?

I have only just recently met Michael, so while he clearly is exceptional, it is hard to reflect fully on this. About a year and a half ago, my primary mentor as a graduate student, Ena Vazquez-Nuttall of Northeastern University, passed away. Ena was an incredible mentor to me – she was just such an ethical person, such a strong leader (she was the only school psychologist in the group that created the first set of multicultural guidelines for APA in the 1980s), and someone who gave so much to me as a mentor. After she died I found myself thinking of her more and more, particularly as a group of us wrote a professional obituary that ultimately appeared in the *Communique* and *The School Psychologist* in 2012. What she taught me was that the best mentors do not try to create miniature versions of themselves, but try to help their mentees bring out the best in themselves as multicultural leaders, whatever that looks like. So, while I in no way can compare myself to her, if I am able to model even half of the generosity and humanity that she gave to me every day and if Michael feels even a fraction as comfortable with me as I was with her, I feel that this will be a very positive experience for both of us.

IN THIS ISSUE

Serving foster youth in the school setting: ethical considerations

Three guiding APA principles are of particular importance in helping foster children cope with the pressures of school.

By [Jennica L. Rebelez, MEd](#)

Abstract

Youth cared for by child welfare services typically endure a host of adverse circumstances drastically different from the majority of their classmates. As a result, these youth often enter the school system with a variety of psychological and educational difficulties. This paper provides an overview of risk and protective factors for youth and addresses critical ethical principles that school psychologists must consider when addressing the needs of youth involved in the foster care system. Issues of informed consent, confidentiality, fairness, justice, and competency, as proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), are important ethical domains in which school psychologists must demonstrate proficiency when working with foster youth in a school setting.

According to the 2010 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and estimates by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are approximately 408,425 students in the foster care system throughout the United States. Often without a voice in the matter, children are placed into the foster care system after experiencing traumatic life events (e.g., abuse, neglect, maltreatment, homelessness, witnessing domestic violence and substance abuse, and other distressing circumstances) (Austin, 2004; Simmel, 2007). Oft times, when foster youth enter school, they are “different” from the majority of their classmates given the extent and severity of distressing life events they have endured.

For decades, researchers have investigated the mental health and educational outcomes of foster youth. Results from various studies have indicated from 40 percent to 85 percent of foster youth have exhibited behavioral or social difficulties that required mental health interventions (Austin, 2004; Landsverk, Burns, Stambaugh & Rolls-Reutz, 2006). More specifically, youth from the foster care system have displayed a range of behavioral and psychological difficulties, including interpersonal and coping difficulties, emotional disturbances, conduct disorders, attention disorders, aggression, self-destructive behaviors, depression, delinquency, autism spectrum disorders, and bipolar disorders (Kerker & Dore, 2006). Moreover these youth tend to exhibit higher rates of externalizing behaviors, such as aggression and self-destructive behaviors (Kerker & Dore, 2006). Alarming, a study conducted by Perora and colleagues (2005) indicated nearly a twofold prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among foster youth compared to that of U.S. war veterans.

In addition to mental health concerns displayed by foster youth, children for whom the state has custody also experience higher rates of adverse educational outcomes compared to classmates. Recent study results indicated a pattern of overrepresentation of foster youth in special education and among those who have been grade retained and/or referred for school discipline (Sherr, 2007). Although foster students have reported more school difficulties compared to non-fostered classmates, researchers have found that the school system plays an integral role in their lives (Hedin, Höjer & Brunnberg, 2011). More specifically, the school context often provides stable routines and offers supportive interactions (with teachers, staff, and peers) and opportunities to succeed. Such factors can help to provide a sense of security, personal pride, and a more hopeful outlook for the future (Hedin et al., 2011).

Given the large population of school-aged youth in the foster care system, it is imperative that school psychologists be aware of the effects of adverse life experiences on subsequent academic achievement (Sherr, 2007). Considering the severity of mental health problems displayed by foster youth, and the high probability of suboptimal future outcomes for these children, it is critical for them to attend schools capable of providing evidenced-based mental health services to better their chances of experiencing psychological well-being and educational success (Austin, 2004).

Pivotal APA ethical principles

For the majority of practicing psychologists in the United States, the ethical codes and principles established by the American Psychological Association (APA) govern their career obligations. The five main principles of the APA ethics code are aspirational goals that all psychologists should strive to uphold throughout the course of their career (APA, 2010). These principles provide an overarching ethical “compass” for psychologists to follow. Following is a delineation of three of these five principles that warrant especial consideration when providing services to foster youth in a school setting.

Principle A—Beneficence and Nonmaleficence—This principle describes a psychologist’s duty to protect the welfare and rights of clients, and perform duties in ways that will, to the greatest possible extent, avoid doing harm. When working with foster youth in a school setting, school psychologists must make purposeful decisions in the best interests of foster children who have likely encountered myriad life adversities that may be contributing to a host of negative experiences and outcomes. School psychologists should stay in frequent communication with foster youth who attend their school, and, when needed, connect them to resources that can help to ensure the wellbeing of these students (e.g., basic necessities such as access to nutrition, educational supplies, and psychological support). At the same time, school psychologists should be respectful of, and sensitive to, the privacy rights of these students.

Principle E— Respect For People’s Rights, Dignity, Worth, Privacy, Confidentiality, and Self-determination— This principle urges psychologists to be respectful of all individuals, regardless of culture, ethnicity, age, sex, socio-economic circumstances, sexual orientation, disability, language, and/or other factors that contribute to the unique

identity of a person. This principle describes the importance of taking professional responsibility for eliminating any biases one may hold that might, intentionally or unintentionally, prejudice them against certain individuals with whom they work. Principle E details the ethical duty of psychologists to protect the rights and welfare of vulnerable individuals by having knowledge of the safeguards in place to ensure such protection. There are a number of laws and safeguards in place for ensuring the protection of foster children within a school context, and school psychologists must be aware of these laws and, when appropriate, where to refer students for services related to these laws (e.g., district foster youth liaison/advocate). Due to a drastically different life experience from most classmates, foster youth may encounter discrimination based on appearance, developmental delays, socialization difficulties, ethnicity, and/or many other factors. School psychologists must give voice to these vulnerable students by providing psycho-education to others about the possible adverse effects on youth that result from being tied to the foster care system. Additionally school psychologists must advocate for practices to promote healthy life trajectories for these youth.

Principle D – Justice – This principle requires that that all individuals be entitled to access and benefit from the contributions and quality of processes, procedures, and services being conducted by psychologists. This principle asserts that psychologists must “exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices” (APA, 2010). School psychologists working with youth in the foster care system must be sure to serve these youth as they would all other students, and ensure that foster youth are offered services that will likely benefit them.

School psychologists practicing in the United States are also subject to the ethical principles established by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), which overlap considerably with the APA Code of Ethics. Although this article does not detail each of these NASP principles, a few pivotal principles will be discussed in conjunction with related APA ethical codes as they are of primary importance when working with youth from the foster care system.

Respect for the dignity and rights of students in the foster care system

The first of the four principles set forth by NASP describes a psychologist’s duty to demonstrate respect for an individual’s autonomy, self-determination and privacy, and to treat others justly and fairly. Trapped in a web of complex legal, environmental, educational, and familial systems, students in the foster care system are often invisible as their lives are dictated by court decisions with little or no input from the child. School is one of the few contexts where foster youth can develop a sense of agency and experience success as a result of their own efforts which can be greatly enhanced by support from teachers, peers, and other school staff. Thus, it is crucial for teachers, counselors, and school psychologists to work together to help foster student autonomy, honor privacy, and create supportive and inclusive school atmospheres where students feel safe and welcomed.

NASP principle I.1: autonomy and self-determination (consent and assent). NASP principle I.1 describes how school psychologists should respect and support the rights of students to participate in the decision-making process regarding their welfare. Importantly, this principle makes it clear that school psychologists can take some actions without the explicit consent or assent from caregivers or students, such as reviewing school records, conducting classroom obligations, assisting with academic interventions, conducting educational screenings, and providing psychological assistance in emergency situations.

According to Principle I, school psychologists are ethically obligated to obtain “parental consent” for any mental health assessments, screenings, or services. For students in the foster care system, legal guardianship is often in flux, shifting among biological parents, foster parents, state courts, social workers, and in some cases state judges. Thus, questions regarding whom can provide informed consent can arise when responsibility for a child placed in state custody is legally shared between the state and biological and/or foster parents (Molin & Palmer, 2005). For example, when a foster child enters a new placement (e.g., foster home, residential/group home), the role of the “parent” is dispersed among multiple persons, with the state typically assuming legal custody, while all decision-making and planning is left to a social worker (Molin & Palmer, 2005). For this reason, obtaining informed consent to provide psychological services for youth in the foster care system can be extremely confusing and complicated. For instance, when working with foster youth, their biological parents often continue to have a legally protected relationship with the student. Biological parents typically have rights to visitation and to be informed of their child’s mental health treatment plan, except in situations where the court has terminated these rights to prevent harm (Molin & Palmer, 2005). In addition, it is the school psychologist’s responsibility to make sure the person who has legal rights to consent for the child is fully informed about the scope of services being implemented and is aware of any risks and/or benefits of the services (e.g., DIS counseling services, social skills groups). In all cases, school psychologists must remain flexible and sensibly determine who has the legal responsibility for providing informed consent (Fisher, 2012, p. 123).

APA standard 3.10: informed consent. Similarly, APA Standard 3, regarding human relations, details the practice of obtaining informed consent. The elements involved when obtaining informed consent include informing the client about the purpose of the intervention, risks, benefits, uncertainties, and alternatives, as well as voluntary choice to accept or refuse the intervention. When working with foster youth, the social worker typically has legal authority to give informed consent for children placed in state custody. Notably, social workers are also responsible for periodically reviewing the question of informed consent, including changes made to treatment or assessment plans, changes in mental health care providers, and addendums to the foster student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP; Molin & Palmer, 2005). The ethical obligation to obtain informed consent may be superseded in cases of psychiatric or medical emergency, in which case the party who has physical custody of the child is obligated to inform the legal guardian (e.g., social worker) of the emergency (Molin & Palmer, 2005). The APA standard on informed consent recommends that psychologists exercise

reasonable judgment when obtaining parental consent if there is doubt that the caretakers interests are not in the best interest of the child (such as in cases of suspected or known child abuse or neglect). There are consent advocates and waivers of parental permission that psychologists can provide foster students who demonstrate maturity and clear understanding of the evaluation or services being proposed (Fisher, 2012, p. 123). Having knowledge of these advocates and waivers will be especially useful for school psychologists working with foster youth who often have multiple individuals governing their lives with conflicting interests. In all cases, it is advisable to inform students of all services being proposed and, at a minimum, to obtain the child's assent. Even though students under 18 years of age are not legally responsible for providing informed consent, the information regarding informed consent should always be presented at a developmentally appropriate level to ensure that the student fully comprehends the nature of the services that they will be receiving (Molin & Palmer, 2005). In cases where it is believed that the student is mature enough and has a clear understanding of what is in their best interest, school psychologists should advocate for the student's ability to legally provide informed consent.

NASP principle I.2: privacy and confidentiality. With regard to students' privacy and confidentiality, NASP describes the duty of school psychologists to "respect the right of persons to choose for themselves whether to disclose their private thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors" (NASP, 2010). When working with foster youth, school psychologists must respect confidentiality as much as legally permissible, and in cases where confidentiality must be broken, the psychologist should first disclose this with the foster student and attempt to facilitate open dialogue about the reasons for the break in confidentiality. School psychologists must also take actions that minimize intrusion of privacy, recognize the privileged communication with the student, and take care not to disclose information that could put them at unnecessary risk. It is critically important that school psychologists have thorough knowledge of this principle as there are often many parties involved in a foster student's life, who may ask for access to confidential material or have questions about the student's mental health. School psychologists must be sure that they clearly discuss the limits of confidentiality with all parties from the onset of services and not reveal any information without student assent and consent from the legal guardian (e.g., foster parent, social worker or biological parent if the student has been reunited).

In the event that a school psychologist must disclose confidential information, they should "do so within the strict boundaries of relevant privacy statutes" (NASP, 2010). Children in state custody should be informed of the limits of their confidential relationship with mental health providers (e.g., school psychologist) and apprised of instances when information about them might be disclosed to other people (e.g., foster or biological parents, other providers, or the legal system). Wishes of students regarding privacy should always be considered (Molin & Palmer, 2005).

APA standard 4: privacy and confidentiality. Standard 4 of the APA Code of Ethics recommends that psychologists make it a "primary obligation" to take precautions to maintain confidentiality and understand the legal repercussions that pertain to the limits

of confidentiality. Standard 4.01 on maintaining confidentiality, explains the importance of protecting all mediums of confidential material (e.g., internet and other electronic media). School psychologists must fully understand the safeguards and mandates under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which provides guidelines to ensure the protection of educational and medical records and specifies circumstances where disclosures of records may be granted. Since foster youth frequently change schools during a school year, psychologists should ensure they obtain the student's school records as soon as possible and review these files in order to better understand the child's history and make appropriate educational placements.

Fairness and justice

NASP Principle I.3 states that school psychologists should engage in actions that promote fairness and justice for all students on campus, assist in cultivating school climates that are safe for all individuals, and be aware of the influence of diversity factors on development, behavior, and learning. Critically, this standard discusses school psychologists' important role in ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to benefit from education and have access to all appropriate school services. Given this, there is an ethical obligation for school psychologists to be familiar with the myriad issues faced by students in the foster care system, including the negative impacts of their life experiences on developmental progress, behavior, learning and other cognitive processes, socialization, educational success, and psychological adjustment. To ensure that foster students are treated fairly and justly, school psychologists should not assume that all foster children's experiences are the same. Instead, school psychologists should approach each student equally by asking them to share their story, following which the school psychologist can tailor assessments, interventions, and resources to fit a particular child.

APA standard 3: human relations. Related to the NASP principle of respecting the dignity and rights of all persons, APA defines the human relations standard as thus: "In their work-related activities, psychologists do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law" (APA, 2010). Standard 3.04 on avoiding harm describes how psychologists should take reasonable steps to minimize harm when "foreseeable and unavoidable" (APA, 2010). When working with children in the foster care system, psychologists should always strive to protect the welfare of the students with whom they work. In situations where there are conflicting interests, the psychologist should always do what is in the best interest of the child's wellbeing.

Competency and responsibility

NASP Principle II, on competency and responsibility, holds school psychologists accountable for ensuring that they are performing their duties only within their boundaries of expertise. Included in this principle are standards for engaging in responsible school-based record keeping and use of materials descriptions. School records are highly important for school psychologists as they provide information regarding places of residence, medical background, school enrollment, educational

performance, discipline records, past psychoeducational evaluations, and previously implemented interventions. It is critical when working with a student in foster care that school psychologists take extra care to document everything that would be helpful for future professionals to know when working with a particular student in order to provide the most effective and streamlined services.

NASP principle II.1: competence. The mandate to provide services only within one's realm of competency requires that psychologists recognize their strengths and limitations before providing referrals when it is clear that a student needs services beyond their scope of expertise. This standard regarding competence also makes it clear that school psychologists should be careful to avoid allowing personal problems to compromise the quality of their services. Further, this standard describes the importance of maintaining competency by continually engaging in the process of lifelong learning by attending professional conferences, gaining supervision or consultation as needed, and keeping current with the literature and best practices.

In a policies and values statement provided by the Child Welfare League of America and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2002), leaders provided a list of values and principles for mental health professionals to consider when working with children in foster care. Specifically, the CWLA and AACAP called for the following principles of competency: (a) child-focused supports, (b) family-driven supports, (c) integration, collaboration, and coordination of community-based mental health services and supports, (d) culturally competent, relevant, and strength-based services and supports provided by knowledgeable, providers who understand cultural diversity in community, and (e) timely, effective, evidence-based, outcome-driven mental health supports (CWLA and AACAP, 2002).

APA standard 2: competence. Similarly, Standard 2.01 of the APA Code of Ethics offers further details regarding working only within one's area of expertise by providing services (applied or research) to populations with which they have received training and supervision. Although school psychologists have knowledge of assessment strategies and interventions for a wide range of student needs, school psychologists typically do not receive any training or education on providing direct services to children from the foster care system. In order to perform duties in line with this ethical principle, school psychologist should become familiar with best practices for assessing and providing interventions for this population. Additionally, consultation with professionals in the social work profession or other psychologists who have experience with this population may be necessary.

NASP principle II.3: responsible assessment and intervention practices. The NASP Principles of Ethics advises that school psychologists maintain integrity and engage in established best professional practices when administering educational and psychological assessments or interventions (either directly or indirectly). That is, school psychologists should only utilize assessment tools and strategies that have research supported reliability and validity for the intended individual. This includes using instruments with current and applicable normative measures and attending to

population references. Thus, when choosing assessment measures for children in the foster care system, school psychologists should select evidence-based instruments that appropriately pertain to an individual student and their present levels of functioning. If psychologists choose to use an instrument that is not sufficiently validated for a particular individual or population, they should make transparent the results and clearly describe issues of validity, performance and interpretation accordingly.

Conclusion

In light of research demonstrating high rates of maladaptive psychological and educational outcomes for youth in the foster care system, this highlighted some of the ethical considerations important in providing assistance to this vulnerable population (Bruskas, 2008). School psychologists who work with youth from the foster care system should become familiar with both APA and NASP principles related to respecting the dignity and rights of students (including autonomy, self-determination, privacy, confidentiality, fairness, justice, human relations) as well as competency and responsibility. Psychologists working with youth in state custody must adhere to the guidelines set forth by the APA, specifically those pertaining to beneficence and nonmaleficence, confidentiality, social justice, and respect for people's rights, dignity, self worth, self determination and privacy. In many cases, students raised in the foster care system have experienced a far greater number of traumatizing events compared to their more typically raised student peers. Thus, it is crucial for school psychologists to give thoughtful consideration before and while working with this at-risk population of students, paying special attention to what is in their best interests. To do so school psychologists must engage in practices that minimize the risk of harm, discrimination or intrusions of privacy while considering the child's wishes to the greatest possible extent.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Special feature: Internship Match 2013

The good news: fewer match failures than 2012. The bad news: accredited internships are still too few and hard to land.

The APPIC Internship Matching Program (the “Match”) places applicants into psychology internship positions at training sites in the United States and Canada. The Match is sponsored and supervised by the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). After all interviews are completed, each applicant and internship program submits a Rank Order List of their preferences. Using an algorithm, the Match then places individuals into positions based entirely on the preferences stated in the Rank Order Lists. At present, a severe imbalance exists between the number of students seeking accredited internships and the number of available internship positions. This special feature on the Internship Match 2013 begins with the APPIC Match Statistics from Phase I followed by a statement from APA/APAGS on the 2013 Match and an open letter from the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs’ Executive Board on the CUDCP’s proposal to limit the Match to applicants from accredited programs.

2013 APPIC Match Statistics – Phase I								
Match Report from the APPIC Board of Directors								
February 22, 2013								
MATCH RATES BY PROGRAM TYPE AND DEGREE								
PROGRAM TYPE	DEGREE SOUGHT	MATCHED		UNMATCHED		WITHDREW OR NO RANKINGS SUBMITTED		TOTAL
Clinical	Ph.D. / Ed.D.	1,219	75.9%	279	17.4%	108	6.7%	1,606
	Psy.D.	1,277	62.5%	514	25.1%	253	12.4%	2,044
	TOTALS	2,496	68.4%	793	21.7%	361	9.9%	3,650
Counseling	Ph.D. / Ed.D.	359	78.4%	72	15.7%	29	6.3%	460
	Psy.D.	27	62.8%	13	30.2%	3	7.0%	43
	TOTALS	386	76.7%	85	16.9%	32	6.4%	503
School	Ph.D. / Ed.D.	123	63.4%	50	25.8%	22	11.3%	195
	Psy.D.	8	30.8%	8	30.8%	10	38.5%	26
	TOTALS	131	59.3%	58	26.2%	32	14.5%	221
Combined	Ph.D. / Ed.D.	41	75.9%	10	18.5%	3	5.6%	54
	Psy.D.	40	75.5%	11	20.8%	2	3.8%	53
	TOTALS	81	75.7%	21	19.6%	5	4.7%	107

Note: Three students seeking EdD degrees were included in the PhD category in order to prevent individuals from being identified.

APA/APAGS statement on the 2013 APPIC internship match

For students in clinical, counseling and school psychology programs, the APPIC Internship Match Day is a critical milestone in their academic careers. The American Psychological Association and American Psychological Association of Graduate Students are encouraged that, during the first phase of the 2013 internship match process, fewer students looking for an internship failed to match than did so last year. However, we also strongly note that the imbalance between the number of students seeking internship and the number of internship positions, particularly accredited internships, is unacceptably high. Helping to resolve the internship crisis is one of APA and APAGS's highest priorities — and will remain so until it is no longer a crisis.

The Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internships Centers released this year's match statistics today:

- 4,481 students registered for the 2013 match
- 4,051 students submitted a ranking list
- 2,515 positions were available at APA- and CPA-accredited internship sites
- 861 positions were available at APPIC member, non-APA/CPA-accredited internship sites
- 2,431 students matched to APA- and CPA-accredited internship sites
- 663 students matched to APPIC member, non-APA/CPA-accredited internship sites

These data indicate a match rate of 76.4 percent to any internship, and 60 percent to APA- and CPA-accredited internships.

These numbers reveal that the field is continuing to experience an internship crisis, one that in many cases haphazardly affects students who are otherwise qualified and prepared to be interns. We reiterate that this crisis is complex and requires the continued focus of many stakeholders devoted to short- and long-term solutions, such as the ones APAGS outlined in July 2012 with our official position on the crisis and published in Grus et al. (2012).

For those who did not match to an internship this year, APAGS extends our uncompromising support and encouragement. We understand that no matter how many times you have braced yourself for the possibility of not matching, the reality still stings. This news may also lead you to doubt your abilities and feel let down by others. These are natural feelings, and you are not alone. APAGS is pained to hear stories of students in these predicaments. They are happening far too frequently and affect students who would very likely match in a system that had no shortage. We hope you find constructive ways to further your professional development in the upcoming year. APAGS and APA continue to fight for students in these situations where ever possible.

APAGS recently updated its article describing next steps for students who did not match. The article contains links to further sources of support.

Those who secured an internship have reason to celebrate the opportunity to continue your professional training and goals without interruption. We hope that you are pleased with your outcome and that you have a great internship training year.

For all students—present and future—APA is extremely concerned about the APPIC internship match imbalance. We have been involved in a number of steps to address this problem in 2012 and 2013, specifically:

- APA has funded an Internship Stimulus Package, designed to help currently non-accredited internships achieve APA accreditation. As a result of the advocacy of APAGS and other training groups, APA agreed in August 2012 to fund up to three million dollars, over three years, for this program. So far, APA has funded 32 internships totaling \$600,000.
- We are advocating for reimbursement of services provided by clinical interns. Internship sites in numerous states have had difficulty securing reimbursement for services provided by interns. Such reimbursements could aid in creating and fund internship positions.
- APA's Commission on Accreditation is at a historic moment in considering revisions to its Guidelines and Principles, providing APAGS with several opportunities to outline our concerns and recommendations related to the internship crisis. We consider each question and comment an opportunity to advance our goal of an APA-accredited internship position for every student in an APA-accredited doctoral program.

At "Courageous Conversations 2," an internship crisis dialogue among APAGS, APPIC and various councils of doctoral training programs, convened in December of 2012, APAGS voiced the needs of its members:

1. We asked doctoral training councils to encourage doctoral programs to provide financial assistance to students failing to APPIC match. This support could include an assistantship with a stipend or free tuition to students who need to stay enrolled to document full-time status. All training councils agreed to recommend this to their member programs.
2. We will educate applicants to doctoral programs about the internship match so they can make fully informed decisions about their education and training. APAGS premiered these materials in January 2013 and will continue to develop and share information at conferences, on the Web and through its Campus Representative network.

Source: American Psychological Association. (2013). [APA/APAGS Statement on the 2013 APPIC Internship Match](http://www.apa.org/apags/resources/appic.aspx). Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/apags/resources/appic.aspx>. Copyright © 2013 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced with permission.

Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP) Executive Board's response to the Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology (CUDCP) proposal to limit the APPIC Internship Match to applicants from accredited programs

Greetings colleagues,

First of all, thanks to those who weighed in on the recent recommendation to APPIC from CUDCP to limit the APPIC internship match, beginning in 2015, to applicants from accredited programs. CUDCP requested that CDSPP endorse this proposal to APPIC. Therefore, CDSPP shared the request with the membership for input. The request from CUDCP is grounded in the national dialogue about the doctoral psychology internship imbalance among those entering the APPIC/APA match.

We received a range of responses and a great deal of dialogue from CDSPP membership. What follows is a summary of the highlights from this dialogue. Several program representatives elected to respond via the List-serve, while others replied offline and the summary that follows integrates both sources of feedback. Overall, 15 school psychology doctoral programs weighed in on the proposal from CUDCP. Seven programs responded in favor of the proposal or indicated that their programs would not be impacted, while eight were against the proposal. Several of those not endorsing the proposal voiced strong feelings about not endorsing the proposal. The most common reasons cited for failing to endorse the proposal were as follows:

1. The internship imbalance would not be greatly improved by limiting the match to those from accredited programs because a very small percentage of students who match to APA-accredited internships are from non-accredited programs.
2. Limiting the match to those from accredited programs would stifle and possibly harm the development of new programs, particularly those moving toward accreditation. Applicants would avoid programs that are not accredited, creating a situation whereby newer programs could not establish themselves and create a pool of high-quality graduates.

The sense was that CDSPP should not endorse the recommendation unless safeguards are established for protecting doctoral programs in the process of securing accreditation (e.g., granting provisional status to programs that have submitted a self-study and are approved for a site visit and allowing their students to participate in the match). School psychology is in a unique situation because there are far fewer accredited internships in schools, where most school psychology students complete internships and work. Furthermore, restricting participation in the match would not help school psychology students.

Respondents supported putting energy and resources into creating accredited internship slots in schools as a fruitful and better resolution to the problem. Respondents supported establishing minimum benchmarks for those applying for internships, such as requiring the successful completion of the dissertation proposal and

comprehensive exams, and argued that this would not only limit the number applying for internships on an annual basis, but also contribute to timely program completion, all issues very important to APA and accredited programs.

Therefore, given the variety of mixed feedback received and the valid concerns raised, the CDSPP Executive Council is not able to endorse the CUDCP proposal to limit the match to those from accredited programs (beginning in 2015) in its current form. However, the CDSPP Executive Council would be very open to entertaining a revised proposal that would include students from currently non-accredited programs that are at various stages of pursuing accreditation (e.g., submission of a self-study, completed site visits, etc.) Perhaps a process establishing benchmarks for "provisional status" similar to internship sites pursuing accreditation could be undertaken.

CDSPP also endorses the expansion of high-quality doctoral internship training sites, including those that meet the recently adopted CDSPP doctoral internship guidelines, as well as APA accredited/APPIC training sites. CDSPP is also committed to prioritizing the establishment of minimal requirements for internship readiness, which may include the successful completion of a dissertation proposal and comprehensive exams. While CDSPP cannot endorse the CUDCP proposal at this time, we are very open as a training council to exploring other avenues that address the internship imbalance and ensure high quality internship training for all of those in applied specialty areas.

Sincerely,

CDSPP Executive Council

Pamela Fenning, Loyola University, Chicago (Chairperson)

Abigail Harris, Fordham University (Chairperson-elect)

Cyndi Riccio, Texas A & M University (Treasurer)

Dan Olympia, University of Utah (Secretary)

Michael Vanderwood, UC Riverside

Christine Malecki, N. Illinois University

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Gary Stoner, University of Rhode Island

Carlen Hennington, Mississippi State University

This message from the CDSPP Executive Board was posted to the Div. 16 Listserv March 9, 2013. Reproduced with permission.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Becoming social justice advocates: Working with ELL youth

Two mentors learn firsthand that the challenge faced by students learning a new language can be less daunting than the challenges faced in adapting to a new culture.

By [Amy Bremer, MA](#), and [Emma Merry, MA](#)

English language learners (ELLs) face a multitude of challenges putting them at risk for a variety of mental health issues including academic failure, drop out, and limited social and post-secondary mobility (Albers, et al., 2009; Albers, Hoffman, & Lundahl, 2009; Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Gudino, Nadeem, & Kataoka, 2011; Varela, 2011). Youth concerned about their immigration status (e.g. documented or undocumented) may be at even greater risk for experiencing these mental health issues due to the impact that immigration status has on future options (e.g., post-secondary education, work). Currently, there is little research available that addresses how best to meet the needs of these students (Albers et al., 2009; Gonzales, 2011). Nonetheless, schools have a responsibility to provide adequate services for all students and, given the rising US population of ELL and immigrant students, there is a vital need to increase knowledge and better understand their specific and unique needs. As future school psychologists we have the potential to increase the quality and quantity of service delivery for ELL students; however, practicing school psychologists may not have the knowledge to help meet the unique needs of these students. In such cases, school psychologists must self-advocate to acquire such knowledge. This is best accomplished via direct and regular engagement with ELL students. This article is a reflection of my having done so during my second year practicum. Also touched upon are some lessons I gleaned from this experience regarding the importance of advocating for social justice for all students. To do so requires knowledge particular to each unique population of students we serve.

Practicum experiences

During second year practicum, the authors completed a mentoring/counseling experience in a middle/high school exclusively serving ELL students. The school offers a range of supports and services available for students from various culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As practicum students we had the opportunity to work with students at this school for four to nine months.

Amy's experience: During my practicum experience, I co-facilitated a conflict resolution group for EL Salvadorian and Mexican high school students. The conflict resolution group was formed by the school's administration due to growing friction between the two groups. The students had little interest in addressing their differences, which may have been, in part, due to perceived pressure from administration to participate in the group. However, conversations about the challenges associated with ELL status

fostered more engagement between these students. My co-facilitator was a police officer and community liaison. Being Latino himself, he was able to connect with the students at a cultural level I could not. Despite the fact he was a police officer, and some of the students were undocumented, they were very open with him, indicating some level of trust. Some of these students expressed anger and frustration about the limited availability of opportunities for them. Other students discussed the pressures and challenges of being the first in their family to plan on pursuing a college education. One student with whom I worked individually was a 17-year-old Latino male who immigrated to the US, from his home country, during the previous school year. His teachers reported concerns regarding a defiant attitude, and failure to submit his work. Also, his mother was concerned about his behavior at home. I provided both mentoring and intervention support with a specific focus on organization and work submission. During our time working together, he shared some of his experiences related to his emigration to the US and spoke about the anger and anxiety he was experiencing relative to being undocumented. We also discussed the concerns voiced by his mother and teachers and worked on English vocabulary.

The issues this student was facing were directly related to his ELL status. His feelings of anger about limited opportunities and his fear associated with his undocumented status weighed heavily on him and adversely affected his ability to focus on school work. Additionally, having been in the US for only a short period of time, he had limited experience with traditional US schooling and did not receive an adequate early education in his home country. Furthermore, he lacked organization skills and often failed to submit his schoolwork, even when done correctly. Although he was capable of completing some of the work being assigned him, his lack of general academic skills (e.g., organization and task completion) was interfering with his ability to perform well.

Emma's experience: I worked individually with a male Latino 8th grade student. Our work together focused on improving his spelling and sight-word vocabulary. This particular student lived with his mother, stepfather, younger brother, and younger sister. This student arrived in the United States from his birth country about two years previous to our time together. Before coming to the US, he lived with his birth father in his home country. It was unclear regarding the amount of formal schooling he had received in his home country. Reportedly, his father had never required him to attend school, thus he attended school "when [he] felt like it." In addition to his ELL status, he was struggling with his native language, as noted by the school psychologist, and presumably due to his lack of previous schooling. During the previous school year he exhibited an excess of disruptive behavior. During the year in which we worked together his behavior was better but still in need of improvement.

It soon became clear that this student was experiencing both behavior and academic difficulties. His disruptive behavior seemed to stem mostly from a new living situation. More specifically his mother had recently married which required the student adjust to having a stepfather. In addition this student's mother had recently given birth to his new stepsibling. I don't believe his disruptive behavior was tied to his ELL status given that such behaviors often occur in adolescents who are struggling with family adjustment

issues. Although he appeared to enjoy working with me, I experienced difficulty getting him to open up about his home situation, which made it difficult to address his behavioral issues.

The second issue my student was experiencing was academic in nature and involved difficulty with spelling and vocabulary. Unlike his behavior problems, this issue was directly related to his ELL status. The student received bi-weekly support from the reading clinic in addition to his weekly hour-long session with me. We worked mostly on practicing his spelling words for upcoming tests. I implemented the evidence-based incremental rehearsal intervention to address spelling. This student responded well to this one-to-one intervention.

Discussion

Our practicum experience was unique in that we were situated in a school exclusively serving an ELL population. Obviously such a placement is not available to most practicum students; however, the lessons we learned, and attempted to communicate herein, are applicable in a general sense to the various student populations for which school psychologists often lack a sufficient level of cultural competency, awareness and empathy.

The most beneficial piece of this experience was the opportunity to learn about the unique needs of ELL youth and to further develop our own competencies for future practice. Given the number of challenges and worries (e.g., cultural barriers, immigration status, discrimination, family separation) that often occur in addition to, and simultaneous with, the already extremely difficult challenge of being an English language learner, it is imperative that school psychologists avoid over attributing student difficulties simply to ELL status. In other words, always try to see the bigger picture.

Following is a brief outline of the more salient considerations and lessons learned through our practicum experience as well as a few recommendations.

Take advantage of opportunities. If your program does not offer formalized experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, seek them out. Gain experience working with as many different populations of students as possible. As future school psychologists we must be adequately prepared and trained to work with all students relative to our caseload.

Promote awareness of the unique needs of ELL youth. Clearly, the school at which we worked was unique in that teachers and staff were well aware of the challenges faced by ELL youth. Such homogeneity in a particular school population is not typical, thus school psychologists must continually strive to become culturally aware of more and different student populations.

Be aware of cultural barriers that might exist. It is important to consider what cultural barriers might exist. Ask yourself: How will this impact my ability to relate to the students I am working with? How can I gain their trust? What resources are presently or

conceivably at my disposal? How and with whom can I advocate for more resources? Remember—The more prepared the better off you will be!

Reflect on your experiences. Becoming a culturally competent school psychologist takes initiative (actively seek out learning, be engaged information, reflect on areas of growth along with areas needing improvement). When working with students from a population you are unfamiliar with, take time to reflect on what you gained from the experiences and how you might do things differently in the future.

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CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

St. John's University Student Affiliates of School Psychology chapter spotlight

Service to the community, professional development and social support for students are focal points for the program.

By [David O. L. Cheng](#) and [Magdalena Buczek](#)

St. John's University's chapter of SASP is constantly improving its ability to meet the needs of its students. Our chapter engages in a variety of events and activities that align with the purpose of SASP as well as the mission of St. John's University.

As a Vincentian university, St. John's strongly influences its students to serve the surrounding communities. With the values of serving the needy, global development, and social justice, the Vincentian heritage of St. John's is very present in the activities of SASP. Various volunteering opportunities offer SASP members the chance to become involved with and serve our community. In the early weeks of each fall semester, University Service Day, a university-wide day of volunteering across NYC and Long Island, has become a SASP tradition for our chapter. This is often the first activity that SASP promotes, engaging new students from the start of their St. John's careers. On another recent trip, we spent the day improving the conditions of local organizations, including a preschool for children with developmental disabilities. This April, St. John's SASP is excited to participate in Relay for Life for the first time.

St. John's SASP enhances the professional development of its students. Along with monthly meetings, St. John's SASP has recently begun holding student-led workshops on practical issues encountered in the program. Students determine workshop topics during our monthly meetings. These workshops offer students opportunities to receive advice and guidance from some of the more experienced students within the program, such as CV writing tips or interview practice.

While workshops offer the ability for our experienced students to give back to the newer students of the program, our meetings and workshops also benefit our older students as well. SASP offers a chance for students to highlight new research findings or discuss important shifts in our field. Discussion topics have included the release of the DSM-5, updates to theories of cognitive intelligence, and information on the release of newer editions of books or assessment tools. In this way, we work to ensure that all students can benefit from each of our SASP meetings and workshops.

Lastly, St. John's SASP also likes to have fun! A main goal of St. John's chapter of SASP is to increase social support amongst students. Fostering social support begins before our new members sit down for their first class meeting. SASP holds a meet-and-greet day, during which students have the opportunity to gain insight into the program and prepare for the challenges ahead. At this meet-and-greet, incoming students get to

meet their “big buddies”—second-year students tasked with welcoming and orienting new students to the program.

We also do our best to schedule professionally relevant social outings and events for students, alumni, and faculty to attend. One event we are especially proud to support is Autism Awareness Day at Citi Field, which we have attended for the past five years. The proceeds of Autism Awareness Day at Citi Field benefit a variety of tri-state area educational, treatment, and outreach programs serving children and families affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASDs).

While we are currently very pleased with the events and activities of our SASP chapter, we do see much room for growth. For example, in the future, we plan to highlight student research projects at future SASP meetings in order to increase student collaboration and research involvement. Being located in Queens, N.Y., so close to many other school psychology programs, another goal in the coming years is to increase collaboration with these nearby programs and SASP chapters.

The St. John’s chapter of SASP has made great strides over the years and will continue to improve with time. As the needs of our student body will no doubt change, our chapter of SASP will remain flexible to accommodate our students and continue to promote best practices of the field.

About the authors

David Cheng is a PsyD student in the School psychology program at St. John’s University. David received his BA in psychology from SUNY Geneseo, where he worked in the Sibling-Peer Research Group with Dr. Ganie DeHart studying the social and cognitive development of children. He has researched the publication practices of major school psychology journals, as well as the programs being used in schools to combat bullying and cyberbullying. His current research interests focus on bullying, cyberbullying, social-emotional learning, and the impact of state and federal laws on the field of school psychology.

Magdalena Buczek is a PsyD student in the school psychology program at St. John's University. Magdalena received her BA in psychology, with a concentration in child and adolescent mental health studies, from New York University in 2009. She has worked as a research assistant at a special-needs preschool, exploring the impact of weighted vests on attention in preschoolers with PDD. Magdalena is currently working on an international research project examining teachers' knowledge of ADHD in nine different countries. Her research interests include the treatment of disruptive disorders as well as the impact of parenting.