

The NERA Researcher

The President's Message



Javarro Russell

Dear NERA,

I hope all is well with everyone. I must admit that I am extremely honored to serve in the role of NERA President. This organization has given much to me academically, professionally, and socially. Each of those gifts have been enhanced by our organization's welcoming environment for volunteers. To witness the genuine interests, commitment, and collaborative efforts that have been garnered by NERA has only inspired me to engage further with NERA. I can recall my first

NERA Conference, which also included my first volunteer experience. [Steve Sireci](#) and [Jennifer Randall](#) asked that I participate in a Diversity Task Force in 2008. I said, "Sure." In 2012, I was asked to step in as a board member for one of my colleagues. I said, "Of course." I was then elected as a board member in the next year. In 2014, I was asked to co-chair the 2015 NERA conference. I said, "How could I turn down an opportunity to increase my stress level for the good of NERA?" And with last year's election I am now humbly serving as President. In each of the roles that I've previously served in, I have had strong leadership to support my efforts. That is yet again the case. [Craig Wells](#) (Past President 2017) and the NERA Board of Directors have strengthened the organization to ensure that it can continue to provide its members with what it has given me, academic, professional, and social enrichment.

Under Craig's leadership, 2017 was a great success for NERA. The conference brought in new members and new sponsors. The organization has introduced innovations to our infrastructure and has continued to focus on the membership experience. Our Infrastructure Committee has been hard at work with improving our proposal system, which is at the heart of the planning process for the conference. The Graduate Student Issues Committee has continued to be a critical avenue for engagement with graduate students. The Communications Committee has created a social media coordinator position to further engage our members, and our awards committees have been focused on identifying our members who should be celebrated for their work. These committees, as well as other NERA committees, have created a solid foundation for our work now and into 2018.

The theme of the 2018 NERA Conference is: *Honoring the Past in Educational Research, While Looking Ahead: What Does the Future Hold?*

Continued on page 3

Inside this issue

- Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Appointed Positions2
- Message from the Editors2
- Member News3
- 48th Annual Conference Highlights4
- 2017 Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award Recipient6
- 2017 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award Recipient8
- 2017 NERA Presidential Address9
- Membership Matters17
- Announcements from Communications Committee19
- Update from NERA Mentoring Program22
- Update from Infrastructure Committee22
- Advanced Announcement of the 2018 NERA Conference.....24
- The Graduate Lounge26
- 2017 Conference Photos27



The NERA Researcher

The NERA Researcher is the official newsletter for members of the Northeastern Educational Research Association.

Message from the Editors

Happy New Year NERA Members!

We hope you all have had a restful and rejuvenating holiday season. Although winter isn't over yet, we are sure that 2018 will bring a new season of exciting research endeavors for all NERA members.

This issue contains important messages from NERA leadership (old and new), as well as the text of the 2017 NERA Presidential Address. Additionally, we feature Dr. April Zenisky and Dr. Marcy Delcourt, both of whom received awards from NERA in 2017.

Our Member News section is a little sparse in this issue, so please contact us with any professional accomplishments that occur before our next issue! We would love to give our members a shout-out for all of the great work they are doing.

As always, a continued thank you to Barbara Helms for her ongoing assistance in reviewing *The NERA Researcher*.

Best wishes for 2018,

Katherine Reynolds and Katrina Roohr
The Editors

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Member News

Please consider submitting your professional accomplishments for recognition in *The NERA Researcher*!

Submissions may be sent to theneraresearcher@nera-education.org.

This theme is one that I have been thinking about for quite some time. As members of NERA, you know that research is not done in a vacuum. It is inspired by and connected to the work that has been done in the past. While I'm aware that the most exciting parts of research are often the methods and the results, it is the literature review that is our opportunity to honor and reflect upon the work that has come before us. Even more, it is where we are able to build the case for our research hypotheses. In next year's conference we want to make sure that we highlight the work that has contributed to the forward-thinking research that will be presented. The 2018 Conference Co-Chairs, [Jade Caines Lee](#) (University of New Hampshire) and [Tabitha McKinley](#) (State of New Jersey Department of Education) are working diligently to provide a program that is thoughtful and reflects the rich history of the organization's efforts to promote quality educational research. Our keynote speaker will be [Mr. Terry Mazany](#), who perfectly embodies this year's conference theme based on his service in urban public school districts, as well as his appointment to the National Assessment Governing Board. We also plan to dig through the NERA archives to find researchers that have presented in areas that have evolved substantively and allow them to reflect on those changes.

Alongside the work that we will be doing for the conference, there are several other things that I would like to accomplish during my tenure as president. Given that my first NERA Conference included an impactful volunteer experience, the issue most important to me is engaging NERA members through volunteer opportunities and events or projects outside of the conference. We were able to gather volunteer interests from over 30 NERA members from the recent post-conference survey. Over the next few months we will be identifying opportunities for those volunteers to become more engaged with NERA. In a semi-related fashion, we will also be looking for NERA members who can present webinars to members as well as nonmembers to garner more interest in our organization. The strength of NERA rests on our ability to engage our members in volunteer activities. Through these efforts, I hope to inspire you all just as Jennifer and Steve inspired me to contribute to the Diversity Task Force, as [Thanos Patelis](#) inspired me to fill in on the board of directors for one of our colleagues, as [John Young](#) inspired me to co-chair the conference, and as [April Zenisky](#) inspired me to run for president.

I wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you in October 2018, if not earlier (stay tuned for announcements on planned social events). I will leave you all with an inspiring piece of poetry:

Roses are red, Violets are blue
There was a fork in the road,
And
Educational research is the bees knees.

By [Javarro Russell](#)

48th Annual Conference Highlights

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the 2017 NERA conference. Participants attended from all over the country to share their research, chair and discuss sessions, participate in roundtables, and volunteer to help the conference run smoothly. This year's program included 2 pre-conference workshops, 3 in-conference workshops, 10 symposia, 4 invited sessions, 24 individual paper sessions, 3 poster sessions, a roundtable session, and technology demonstrations spread across two and a half days.

We were fortunate to have a number of thought-provoking and engaging speakers during this year's conference. Virginia Edwards spoke about combating "fake news" and misinformation in the public sphere. We had a keynote panel discussing school choice with Preston Green, Kathryn McDermott, and Casey Cobb. Kurt Geisinger took questions from NERA attendees, and past NERA presidents discussed future trends in educational research. iReady and Stata also provided technology demonstrations to attendees.

We would like to thank all of the pre- and in-conference workshop facilitators for volunteering their expertise in service of NERA and our members. Thank you to Thomas Christ, Susan McNally, Ye Tong, Ellen Forte, Liz Summers, Elizabeth Greninger, Lauren Deters, Andrew Jones, Carl Setzer, Jody Piro, Marcia Delcourt, Catherine O'Callaghan, Wes DeSantis, and Erik Gundel.

We would also like to thank Elizabeth Pyburn and the GSIC for organizing two very thoughtful sessions for graduate students during the conference: one on interviewing and another on publishing.

In addition to acknowledging the contributors to the program, we would like to thank the many volunteers who shared their valuable time and insight in making this year's conference a success. From reviewing proposals, to discussing and chairing sessions, to those that helped register new and existing members and participants at the registration desk, we appreciated your help. We would like to offer a special thanks to our two NERA registrars, Madeline Berkowitz and Colleen Boyle, for all of your help during the conference.

We would also like to thank all of the institutional and personal conference sponsors, as the annual meeting would not have been possible without their contributions.

Finally, we would like to thank each and every one of you for helping to make this year's meeting an engaging and enriching experience. At each conference the members all help to make the conference special for educational researchers from all settings and at all stages in their career. We look forward to the exciting program that the 2018 conference co-chairs, Tabitha McKinley and Jade Caines Lee, are planning with Javarro Russell, the 2018 NERA president.

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2017 Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service Dr. April Zenisky



The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is presented to a longstanding NERA member who “has generously given of self to NERA, to advance its mission and to enable it to thrive.” The award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo D. Doherty who was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a professional association for educational research. His leadership qualities, both ethical and compassionate, encouraged others to pursue and achieve their goals. Thus, this award, not given annually, is presented to a NERA member who has shown outstanding leadership and service to our organization. The recipient of the 2017 NERA Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service is **Dr. April Zenisky**. Her extensive service and valuable contributions to the organization make her the perfect person for this award.

April began attending NERA in 1998 as a graduate student. She served as NERA conference co-chair in 2007, as a member of the NERA Board of Directors from 2008-2011, acting as the liaison to the awards committees, and as NERA president-elect, president, and past-president from 2013-2016. Although the amount of NERA roles that she has served is extremely impressive, it is even more important to note what April has accomplished in these roles, and the traits that April exemplifies in everything she has done and continues to do for NERA.

When April was on the Board of Directors, she volunteered to spearhead the NERA handbook revision. For many years prior to this, the NERA handbook had been outdated and difficult to navigate. It was truly a mixture of a wide variety of information with many purposes and no organization. Unfortunately, NERA members are often busy with a million other tasks pertaining to the conference, their own professional and personal agendas, and only a few have ever been able to make this a priority. Thankfully, April is also an exception to the rule, and took on the valuable task of reorganizing, revising, and recreating the NERA handbook and forming the wonderful document that exists today. This was no easy task and took many years of hard work. It will serve as a living document that will be used extensively for decades and will help NERA to thrive and continue to meet its mission. A testament to this is the amount of times that questions have come up over the past few years during NERA discussions or at board meetings, and the answer consistently is, “Let’s check the handbook!”

NERA was extremely lucky to have elected April as the 2015 NERA president. In her year as president, she worked with her conference chairs to plan a great conference with amazing speakers, informative workshops, and interesting sessions. The theme of “Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds” helped bring researchers of all types and fields together and encourage collaboration,

Continued on page 7

NERA

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which is extremely important, yet often hard to achieve. The two keynote speakers, Dr. Ron Ferguson and Dr. Nancy Streim, were wonderful choices and attracted current, former, and new members to come to the conference to hear their enlightening talks which highlighted the theme of showing how research can affect policy and the value of university-school partnerships.

Outside of the conference, April was a driving force in bringing renewed structure to NERA's efforts and missions. She worked with the NERA committees to rethink our yearly plans and ensure that they align with the seven strategic goals outlined by the NERA Strategic Planning Committee. She also set up an official NERA communications policy to officially establish what could be sent via e-mail, social media, and message boards. Thus, April's presidency will be remembered as having provided NERA with extensive valuable infrastructure in many ways.

Any UMass Amherst graduate student, or any graduate student or young professional that has attended NERA, recognizes April for her unique ability to mentor anyone and everyone. Although this is not a mentoring award, her mentoring is just another one of the countless ways she has contributed to making NERA the organization that it is and continues to be. Throughout the NERA conference, it is typical to see April giving research and career advice to anyone that she meets. NERA attendees are always excited to get the opportunity to speak to her about score reporting and computer-adaptive testing, and get a taste of her wisdom. She has been a fantastic role model for young people who are interested in exploring educational research and psychometrics, and there are dozens of students—and faculty and other professionals—who are grateful for her influence.

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2017 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award For Distinguished Mentoring Dr. Marcy Delcourt



Dr. Marcy Delcourt, the recipient of NERA's 2017 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring, is by all accounts an exceptional mentor, leader, and educator. Her nominator described her as one who has a "passion to grow leaders, support them, create a lasting professional community, and meet the personal and career needs of those under her mentorship." Another supporter wrote of Dr. Delcourt that, "Her voice, educational vision and beliefs live in the minds of her students, and her impact is far-reaching. Her love of research and unending questioning is a voice in my head that I hear loud and clear when I am exploring ideas to make changes and/or improvements in my leadership practice. Her focus on scholarly research has built a foundation in all of the doctoral students who have spread out across the tri-state area. Her love of continuous learning, her devotion to the doctoral program, and her strong desire to make a difference in the world of educational leadership is unmatched."

Her dedication to her students is attested to by yet another supporter, who stated that Dr. Delcourt is one who, "holds high expectations for her students' performance; understands their needs and interests, and demonstrates effective teaching, professionalism, patience, and flexibility as she guides her students throughout their program. She is always ready and willing to provide her students with the unlimited support needed to move forward. She often met with me in person on Saturdays, Skyped on Sundays, stayed for hours after her classes in the evenings, and constantly challenged me on how to think outside the box and improve my work."

In addition to her extraordinary record as a mentor and educator, Dr. Delcourt worked tirelessly for years to establish the EdD Instructional Leadership program at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU). Her hard work paid off, as that program is now a model for similar programs in the US, Canada, and India. Due to her vision and high standards, she has had a tremendous impact on the preparation of educational leaders. Her former students hold educational leadership position in school districts across the tri-state area. As one such leader stated, through the program at WCSU, he has obtained "the research skills needed to question, vet, and select research-based instructional strategies and practices for students in grades K-12, underachieving, gifted, and males and females from diverse and homogeneous backgrounds across most content areas."

And yet another nominator stated "the leadership qualities and educational expertise gained through the program have pushed me to complete my New York State Administrative certifications, so that I may one day become a district leader. None of these goals would have been possible without the knowledge, attributes, and leadership potential gained by the doctoral work. and by the exceptional program offered through Western Connecticut State University."

NERA is proud to have Dr. Delcourt among its members. She epitomizes the mentorship qualities embodied in the Donlon award, and it is with the greatest pleasure and deepest respect that the award committee members chose her for this year's award.

What if What We Know Ain't So?

2017 NERA Presidential Address

Craig S. Wells

University of Massachusetts Amherst

"Science matters!" This succinct, yet powerful quote is from Neil de Grasse Tyson when he gave his commencement speech at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2015. To illustrate the importance of science, de Grasse Tyson described how humans lived thousands of years ago with clean air and water, organic fruits and vegetables, and free range animals — and yet their life expectancy was 35 years. Today, our life expectancy is more than double that, much of which has to do with innovations and advancements discovered using the scientific method.

The scientific method is a lens through which I view the world. It goes beyond what I teach, study, or write about, and permeates my thinking. The scientific method leads us to innovations and new knowledge to help solve problems through a process that integrates reason and empirical evidence to evaluate or generate claims about the world. We must recognize, however, that the scientific method does not produce infallible knowledge and there are many challenges we face when attempting to accumulate useful knowledge using it. In this paper, I want to address the challenge Type I errors pose in building theories, and propose possible solutions.

To introduce the challenge that Type I errors pose, I will examine a study based on the theory of power poses, concentrating on the authors' empirical claims and subsequent effect on people's behavior. It has been purported that a person's posture can influence attitude, behavior, and possibly, body chemistry. More specifically, by adopting a posture of strength and power — one

where a person's body takes up space — s/he can feel more powerful and assertive. In 2010, Carney, Cuddy, and Yap published a study that examined the effects of power poses on attitude, behavior, and cortisol and testosterone levels. The authors first measured the participants' cortisol and testosterone levels. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of two groups that differed with respect to the type of poses adopted: high-power versus low-power poses. The participants adopted the postures for two minutes and then responded to a set of items measuring how powerful they felt. The participants were then given an opportunity to gamble and afterward, the researchers measured the cortisol and testosterone levels again. The authors found that the high-power pose group felt more powerful, were more likely to engage in gambling behavior, and had higher testosterone levels and lower cortisol levels compared to the low-power pose group (all of the differences were statistically significant with at least moderate effect sizes).

The Carney, Cuddy, and Yap study received widespread attention in the mass media with articles appearing in prestigious newspapers such as the *New York Times*. The second author, Amy Cuddy, gave one of the most popular Ted Talks in 2012 ("Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are") where she described the 2010 study and claimed that tiny tweaks in a person's behavior can lead to big changes in her/his life. In the Ted Talk, she further described how power poses are particularly helpful for people who feel powerless or like imposters, making the strong empirical claim that power poses "can significantly change

Continued on page 10

the outcome of their lives.” Cuddy also published a book entitled “Presence” that quickly became a *New York Times* best-seller. Based on the widespread publicity, many of us taught our students and children to use power poses so that they could become more assertive and increase their chances of becoming successful.

In 2016, Dana Carney, who is the first author in the 2010 study, put a two-page commentary on her website entitled, “My Position on Power Poses,” where she questioned the power pose effects. In fact, she stated in the commentary that “I do not believe that ‘power pose’ effects are real.” What happened between 2010 and 2016 to make Carney question the claims in the 2010 study? Well, first, a study by Ranehill et al. (2015) that used a larger sample size and more appropriate analyses failed to replicate the findings from the 2010 study regarding the risk behavior and hormonal changes (participants in the high-power pose group still felt more powerful than the low-power pose group, which is consistent with other research). Second, Carney described several issues with the 2010 study, one of which was related to the statistical analyses used to compare the groups referred to as *p*-hacking. All of the issues led Carney to conclude that several of the results in the 2010 study were aberrant, leading to Type I errors and subsequently false claims about the efficacy of power poses.

Type I errors challenge our ability to accumulate knowledge. What makes them more problematic is that because the scientific method is so revered (at least by many of us who use it), we often forget that the data contain error and we essentially trust the results. Type I errors are dangerous because they are *illusions of fact* that came from science. As a result, Type I errors can quickly become part of what we think and they are very difficult to remove from the literature. For example, failed replications, that is, studies that do not report statistically significant results, are more dif-

ficult to publish than studies that have significant results.

The dangers of Type I errors can be summed up well with quotes from famous authors. For example, the title of this paper comes from a Mark Twain quote: “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.” It is notable that this quote inspired my title because it seems that Mark Twain never said it, and yet it is used in popular culture such as movies. George Bernard Shaw was another author who made a similar quote: “Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance.” The false knowledge that Shaw is referring to can come from multiple sources such as fake news, superstitious beliefs, chance, poor empirical methods, and scientific overreach. We must work hard to eliminate false knowledge, and the purpose of this paper is to address the effect of poor research methods and scientific overreach.

Perhaps I am sounding a false alarm myself; perhaps my concern is unwarranted or not a big deal. To determine if Type I errors in the social sciences are prevalent and a serious problem, we can examine how often studies are being replicated. Two research centers that have explored the problem of lack of replication in the social sciences are the Center for Open Science, located in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Meta-Research Innovation Center at Stanford University. Both of these organizations have reported that a large proportion of studies in the social sciences are not being replicated. A failed replication can occur when an original published study showed a statistically significant result, whereas subsequent studies failed to report significance. However, perhaps a more common failed replication occurs when the original study claims a significant and meaningful effect, but other studies find small to trivial effects, albeit statistically significant. In both cases, the empirical claims we are making are not valid. Given the lack of replication, Type I errors seem to

Continued on page 11

be a pervasive issue and are clearly a problem we must face.

One of the reasons Type I errors are so common is due to the way we define them in practice. The technical definition of a Type I error is *a researcher falsely rejects the null hypothesis* — a definition that is straightforward and unexceptional. The definition commonly used in practice, however, is that a *researcher claims that an effect exists when in fact the effect is zero*. This definition of a Type I error is problematic because it is not consistent with the claims we want to make. The empirical claims we are interested in making are that the effect is non-zero *and* meaningful. Thus, we want to control the rate at which we make a false claim that, for example, two groups are meaningfully different. A more accurate and interesting definition of a Type I error, therefore, is a *researcher claims an effect is meaningful when in fact it is trivial*. This definition is consistent with the empirical claims and inferences we want to draw from our analyses.

The problem I am addressing gets at the heart of the issue of statistical versus practical significance. We are well aware that showing statistical significance is not sufficient — we need to also show that the effect (e.g., difference or correlation) is practically important. The most common way of merging statistical and practical significance is to use a blended approach where we use an effect size to classify a statistically significant result (i.e., rejection of the null hypothesis that states the effect equals zero) as trivial or meaningful, sometimes going as far as to state the effect as small, moderate, or large. The problem with the blended approach is that it leads to very high Type I error rates for meaningful claims. For example, suppose you are comparing two groups, and for the results to be minimally interesting, the effect size (based on Cohen's *d*) in the population must be greater than 0.20. Let's say that the true effect size is 0.18, indicating that the groups do not differ meaning-

fully. If you use the blended approach with 200 participants per group, you will have a 42% chance of *falsely* concluding that the results are meaningful; that is, you will reject the null hypothesis and observe an effect size greater than 0.20 42% of the time resulting in a Type I error rate of .42. Figure 1 shows the sampling distribution of the effect size for this scenario. The shaded portion in the right-tail distribution are Type I errors. Although the Type I error rate will fluctuate with the sample size, it will always be inflated.

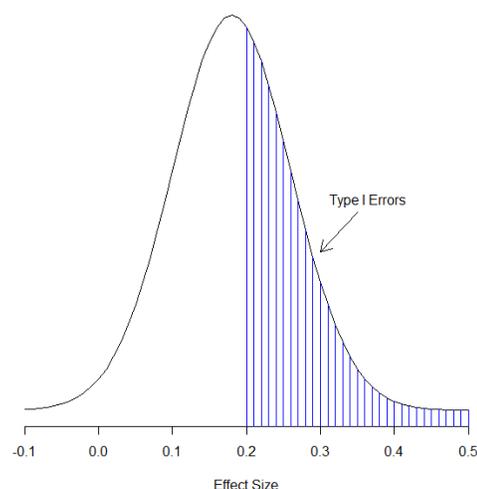


Figure 1. Sampling distribution for the effect size (Cohen's *d*).

A solution to the inflated Type I error rate problem when using the blended approach is to combine statistical and practical significance into the hypothesis test. For example, instead of testing a null hypothesis that states the effect is zero, we can specify under the null hypothesis that the effect is non-zero, but trivial. Therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis in this context allows us to conclude that the result is statistically *and* practically significant, while also controlling the Type I

Continued on page 12

error rate at the nominal level. Specifying values under the null hypothesis that we consider trivial is referred to as range-null hypothesis testing (Serlin & Lapsley, 1985).

One way to implement the range-null hypothesis testing approach is to use confidence intervals on effect sizes such as Cohen's d . For example, suppose we were interested in comparing the means of two groups and we decided that the standardized mean difference (i.e., Cohen's d) in the population must exceed 0.20 for the result to be meaningful. If we observed a Cohen's d of 0.60, and a 95% confidence interval that did not include the value specified under the null hypothesis (i.e., 0.20), then we can conclude that the effect was meaningful with a Type I error rate of .05 (see 95% confidence interval for Study 1 in Figure 2). However, if the confidence interval does include the value under the null, then we cannot conclude that the effect is meaningful (see 95% confidence interval for Study 2 in Figure 2). The appeal of this approach is that it supports meaningful claims with a small risk of committing a Type I error.

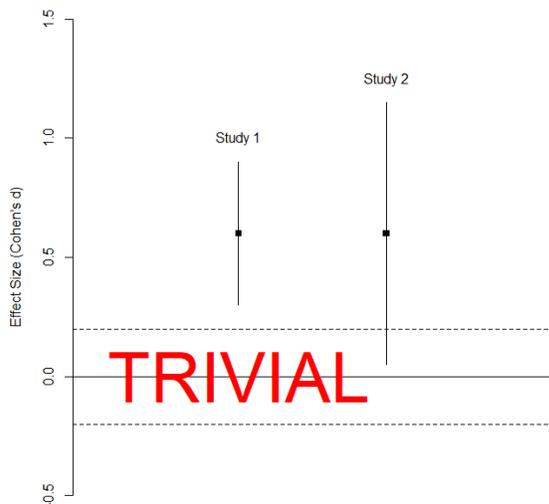


Figure 2. 95% confidence interval for effect size (Cohen's d) for two hypothetical studies, both with an observed Cohen's d of 0.60.

Although testing meaningful hypotheses using confidence intervals on effect sizes is an attractive approach, there are challenges in implementing it in practice. First, it requires us to think deeply about what is a minimally interesting criterion for our effect size — a value that defines what is trivial versus minimally meaningful. Using this approach, you can no longer collect data and run a statistical test against a mindless value of zero. Instead, you will have to think about the context, extensively review the literature, and decide what constitutes something interesting. Second, not all software packages provide confidence intervals for effect sizes, and unfortunately, this is not the type of procedure we can do using hand calculations. Therefore, it is important that we have access to software to support testing meaningful hypotheses via confidence intervals on effect sizes. Third, using confidence intervals to test range-null hypotheses requires larger sample sizes to have sufficient power to detect meaningful effects. Otherwise, the confidence intervals will typically overlap with values close to zero for all but large effect sizes.

Although testing meaningful hypotheses will help us reduce the prevalence of Type I errors in the literature, we still need to be concerned about controlling false claims. Fortunately, there are several things we can do to alleviate this problem. First, we should use rigorously tested methods and eschew procedures that have been shown to have inflated Type I error rates. For instance, the Carney, Cuddy, and Yap (2010) study used p -hacking, which has notoriously inflated Type I error rates. The use of non-rigorous methods, however, is sometimes viewed as a victimless offense such as jaywalking. Unfortunately, for scientific research, the offense is much worse in that the use of poor methods leads to the proliferation of Type I errors, which makes it difficult to advance our knowledge and help solve important practical problems.

Continued on page 13

Second, we need to keep our psychological *id* in check. We strongly desire statistically significant results so that we can publish our findings with the intention of solving problems so that we can make the world a better place — not to mention, the pressure of having to publish to get tenure, secure grants, and other professional encumbrances. Therefore, professional ambitions may tempt us to bend the rules of hypothesis testing (such as declaring a result as marginally significant, which is a meaningless statement) with the unfortunate consequence of increasing the number of false claims in the literature.

Third, we need to rely on independent replications to build robust theories. Even if we use appropriate methods, there will always be a chance of committing a Type I error. Independent replications will help us weed out the Type I errors from the literature, providing more confidence in our theories. Unfortunately, many researchers do not respect the role of replication in science, and many journals are not likely to publish replications. As a result, it may be helpful to dedicate journals (or at least a proportion of articles published within a journal) to replications.

Fourth, we must reduce the significance bias in the journals. Studies with significant results are more likely to be published than studies that have non-significant results, which leads to a biased sample of studies that makes it into the literature. One way of addressing this issue is to review manuscripts based on the introduction and method sections, sans the results and discussion. Besides avoiding the significance bias in accepting manuscripts, the advantages of this approach are that authors will have to make a strong argument for why the study is important, convince the reviewers of its merit, and describe the methods that will lead to valid inferences.

As Neil de Grasse Tyson stated, “science matters!” However, I would like to rephrase his mes-

sage to state that the *scientific method matters, but only if we ask interesting questions and use methods that provide meaningful empirical claims*. This applies not only to hypothesis testing, but also to other approaches such as qualitative methods. If we can concentrate on studying important problems using well-tested, rigorous methods, we can build robust theories that will help solve significant problems.

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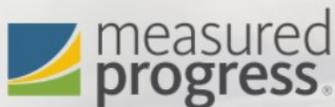
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Membership Matters

As we prepare for 2018 and some new themes within NERA, the membership committee is experiencing a changing of the guards. To that end, Membership will work closely with the Ambassadors' program to ensure that as an organization, we are not only recruiting new members, but retaining them through ensuring their satisfaction and engagement throughout the year.

In 2018, the NERA Membership Committee Chair will be Dr. Matthew James Madison of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Dr. Matthew J. Madison, Assistant Professor of Education, University of California, Los Angeles



Dr. Madison uses his training in educational psychology, educational assessment, and statistics to examine and refine psychometric methodologies as a means of improving K–16 educational assessment. More specifically, he has focused his research on a class of contemporary item response models called diagnostic classification models (DCMs) and their application in educational contexts. His most recent work has examined using DCMs in longitudinal settings to model student growth over time. Currently, Dr. Madison is collaborating with the UCLA Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project, a collaborative assessment project with the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems, aimed at developing targeted assessments that offer diagnostic information about students' strengths and weaknesses in areas of grades 6–16 mathematics. Dr. Madison has been an active member of NERA since 2013.

The Ambassadors' Chair will be Dr. Sarah Ferguson of Rowan University (Glassboro, New Jersey).

Dr. Sarah Ferguson, Assistant Professor of Quantitative Methods, Rowan University



Sarah is an applied methodologist in education research, focusing on the application of advanced research methods and statistics approaches to issues in education. Prior to her appointment at Rowan University, Sarah was a certified teacher in the state of Texas, with certifications in Elementary Education, Middle School Science, and High School Science. Her current research focuses on two areas: the education and utilization of quality research methods and analyses, and supporting the career development pathway for individuals from secondary school to career in STEM fields. Sarah has been involved with NERA since 2016, and prior to moving to this region she was involved with the Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA), including election to the SERA board for one year as the Graduate Student Representative.

Many thanks to the individuals who have volunteered to serve to work toward the aims of NERA membership. Please look for information pertaining to social events being planned by these groups in the coming months.

In addition, as I retreat to the background of membership for more pressing matters (NERA 2018 conference planning), I would like to encourage those members with professional social media pages to

Continued on page 17

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continue to publicize NERA as a whole, NERA membership, and the work of our fellow researchers. These pages create a great platform for far reaching recruitment, and we are grateful to all those who continue to recruit and help us retain quality researchers in our ranks!

If you ever have questions, concerns, would like to join the Membership Committee, or have ideas about ways to enrich NERA membership, please reach out. Membership is the heartbeat of our great organization.

Making the Most of Your Membership,

Tabitha McKinley, Outgoing Membership Chair



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Announcements from the Communications Committee

Happy 2018, NERA members! We hope everyone is staying safe and warm this winter. We have some updates to announce from the Communications Committee. Additionally, we would like to remind everyone of the current procedure for sending information out to NERA members.

Welcome to New Committee Members!

First, we would like to extend a big welcome and thank you to our two newest committee members: Frank Padellaro and Ali Söken, both doctoral students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Frank and Ali began their roles as Social Media Coordinators for NERA a few months ago and have done a fantastic job thus far. We are grateful to have them on our team!

Along with this change in committee members, the duties of our Social Media Coordinators have changed. Frank and Ali will be posting content to our social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) approximately weekly. Some of this content will include announcements directly relevant to NERA. However, we also hope to post empirical and popular press articles about cutting-edge educational research methods and topics, discussion questions about recent findings, trends, and controversies in educational research, and any other content NERA members may find interesting or helpful. The goals of these restructured Social Media Coordinator positions include facilitating more frequent communication between researchers and practitioners, as well as NERA members and non-members, keeping members informed of emerging trends in educational research, and broadening participation in NERA.

Send Us Content You Find Interesting!

More frequent, regular social media posts require regular content. Frank and Ali have done a wonderful job of finding content relevant to NERA member interests, and will continue to do so. If you find an article, empirical or popular press, that you feel has a broad impact on educational research, please feel free to email a link to the article, along with a brief (less than one paragraph) summary to Frank, Ali, and myself (Monica). Our email addresses are located on the Communications Request form on the NERA website (<http://www.nera-education.org/downloadables.php>). Please do not hesitate to send us anything else you would like to see on NERA's social media pages, such as discussion questions about recent controversies and trends in educational research. We want our social media pages to represent your interests as members of NERA!

Communications Request Procedures

Our mission is to distribute important information to the NERA community efficiently, and facilitate communication between NERA community members. If you would like to distribute information to the NERA community about topics such as award announcements, conference updates, and particularly pertinent information from our parent organization, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), please fill out the communication request form on the NERA website (<http://www.nera-education.org/downloadables.php>). Communication responsibilities are divided by outlet. The outlets we currently use, the positions responsible for maintaining them and associated committee members are listed on the following page. Please email the completed request form to myself (Monica Erbacher) and the coordinator(s) associated with the requested outlet(s).

Continued on page 19

Committee members and their roles:

Monica Erbacher, Committee Chair, University of Arizona

Duy Pham, E-mail Coordinator, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Bo Bashkov, Webmaster, American Board of Internal Medicine

Frank Padellaro, Social Media Coordinator, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Ali Söken, Social Media Coordinator, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Jonathan Steinberg, Former Chair & Advisor, Educational Testing Service

Jeanne Horst, Former Chair & Advisor, James Madison University

New Members are Always Welcome!

Getting involved in a committee is an excellent way of networking with individuals at other institutions. The Communications Committee corresponds with anyone making a communications request, and anyone following our social media sites. For graduate students and newer faculty members in particular, committee involvement is a great way to get your name out there. If you are interested in sharing duties for a particular outlet, initiating use of a new outlet, or providing other support to the committee, please contact Monica Erbacher at MonicaKErbacher@gmail.com.

NERA has become what it is thanks to enthusiastic volunteers and members like you. Thank you for a wonderful 2017 conference and we wish you all a safe, happy, productive 2018!

Monica K. Erbacher
Chair, Communications Committee



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Update from the NERA Mentoring Program

(Co-Chairs Jerusha Henderek and Juliette Lyons-Thomas)

The Mentoring Program's focus over the past several years has been on the broad development of new and early career NERA members, including work on the research, academic, and professional development fronts. At the most recent NERA conference, the Mentoring Program successfully matched 23 mentor/mentee pairs, continuing the tradition of providing direct networking connections at the conference to a large number of attendees. The Mentoring Program is focused on improving not just the quantity, but the quality of mentoring that occurs during and outside of the annual conference.

The Mentoring Committee Co-Chairs would like to thank the mentors for their willingness to share their time, energy, and experiences with fellow NERA members. We know that this work is time consuming, and hope that you benefitted from sharing your experience with others.

Perhaps more importantly, we thank the mentees for their willingness to reach out and ask for mentorship. "Reaching out" is not something any of us are taught to do; asking for mentoring requires the courage to ask for help, and the humility to admit there are things you do not know. We applaud mentees for their openness to ask for help, and are grateful to be part of a professional community that is safe and supportive enough for individuals to ask for, and receive, mentoring from fellow members. We look forward to continuing the success of the Mentoring Program in this upcoming year!

Update from the Infrastructure Committee

The Infrastructure Committee is continuously working to improve NERA's infrastructure to support the important work of its committees and leadership. Currently, we are working with our website vendor (Veith Consulting) on redesigns of some of the website, proposal system, and database functionality. Among other changes, we plan to have submitted proposals linked directly to your membership account. This should allow those submitting proposals to better monitor their proposal as it is reviewed and scheduled in the conference.

We would love to hear from NERA's membership regarding potential improvements or changes to our infrastructure. If you have any recommendations, please contact Jason Kopp (koppjp@gmail.com) with your ideas.



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Advanced Announcement of the 2018 NERA Conference

Tabitha McKinley and Jade Caines Lee

2018 Conference Co-Chairs



It may seem premature to share news related to the 2018 annual conference, but we are just too excited to wait! First, please mark your calendars: Wednesday, October 17 through Friday, October 19. Also, there will be several new and innovative offerings, including a **Parent Room** for expectant and/or nursing moms (or for parents traveling with kids who just need a place to “be!”). Additionally, we are hosting a **“Meet the Author”** event for NERA members who have written a book and would love an opportunity to share it with others (if you are interested in learning more, please email either co-chair ASAP). We also have an exciting line-up of confirmed panelists and keynote speakers (to be featured in the Spring NERA Researcher). Finally, since we know that October seems so far away, we have several events planned in the near future, including monthly “coffee break” webinars and exciting social events. First up, mark your calendars for **“Skating with the President”** at Rockefeller Center in New York City for President’s Day Weekend (Sunday, February 18). President Javarro Russell can’t wait. Stay tuned for more details!

For any questions, comments, or concerns pertaining to the conference, please feel free to reach out. We are enthusiastic to share: nera18conference@gmail.com



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The Graduate Lounge

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Our Mission: The mission of the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) is to support the involvement and professional development of NERA graduate student members and to reach out to new graduate students in an effort to increase the diversity of institutions represented at NERA.

GSIC News

We appreciate all members who volunteered and participated in graduate student sessions at this year's NERA conference. In 2017, the GSIC sponsored sessions were "Getting Ready to Publish" and "The Art of the Interview." Both sessions were completed successfully with the room full of passionate graduate students with burning questions and comments. We also hosted the annual graduate student social event which allowed graduate students to mingle and network.

New GSIC members have been elected, and submissions for the NERA Best Paper by a Graduate Student were collected. The award will be presented at the 2018 NERA conference. We look forward to another great year!

GSIC Call for New Members

Serving on the GSIC is a great way to get involved with NERA and build relationships with other graduate students! Responsibilities include collaborating with students from various institutions to plan GSIC-sponsored in-conference sessions, and the GSIC student social. New members are selected each year after the NERA conference.

For more information on how to apply and get involved, please contact
neragraduatetestudents@gmail.com.

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2017 Conference Photos



Session Title: **Opportunities and Challenges for Educator Preparation Programs Obtaining Measures on Student Learning to Advance Education**

Presenters: Dr. Allen Cook,
University of Bridgeport

Dr. Nancy DeJarnette,
University of Bridgeport

Dr. Mary Yakimowski,
Sacred Heart University

Ms. Kathryn Turcsany-Manley,
Sacred Heart University

Dr. Jacob Easley II,
Eastern CT State University

Dr. Colleen MacKinnon
Independent Consultant



College of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst had a great showing at the NERA Annual Conference from October 18-20, 2017 in Trumbull, CT.

A few conference highlights:

- There were many excellent symposia, papers, and poster presentations from UMass faculty, students, and alumni!
- Our very own Craig Wells, Associate Professor in the Research, Educational Measurement, and Psychometrics (REMP) concentration, served as organizational president this year. His keynote on the power pose was an excellent reminder to be vigilant for Type I error as we share our research with the world.
- Congratulations to April Zenisky, Research Associate Professor for REMP, who received the Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service to NERA!
- Katie McDermott, Professor in Educational Policy and Leadership, provided valuable perspective and insight as one of three Keynote Panelists on "Making Sense of the School Choice Debate: A Nuanced Approach through Varied Perspectives"
- Kudos to Reilly Kopp and Meghan Henningson, two undergraduate students, for presenting an undergraduate research project they worked on with the Center for Student Success Research, and representing the next generation of educational researchers!

2017 Conference Photos

