

The NERA
 Researcher is a
 quarterly
 newsletter for
 members of the
 Northeastern
 Educational
 Research
 Association

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The NERA Researcher

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June 2009

The President's Message



Kristen Huff

Scholarly Research: A Search for the Bottom Turtle

A story goes that after one of his famous Harvard lectures on the psychology of religion, the father of modern psychology, William James, was approached by an elderly woman who said that the Earth rested on the back of a turtle. When Dr. James asked what the turtle was standing on, the woman replied, "A second turtle." When Dr. James persisted by asking on what the second turtle was standing, the woman, as if sensing a logical trap, said, "It's no use, Professor. It's turtles, turtles, turtles, all the way down."

I've been back from AERA/NCME just a couple of weeks, and am still following up on all of the emails and phone calls I promised folks during excited talks after sessions, during receptions and other informal gatherings, when we would strike upon a common interest and then scramble to exchange contact information. I must admit, the social aspect of conferences, especially the professional networking, is undeniably one of my two favorite reasons for attending. The other reason is that I am passionate about my own research interests, and look forward to attending sessions that challenge my assumptions, or present new twists on the questions that are the core of my own research agenda.

My particular area of interest is improving large-scale assessment design to the degree that "teaching to the test" becomes something that teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders *want* to do because it helps students learn. I firmly and without reservation believe our assessments -- even ones comprised mostly of multiple-choice items -- can measure the same learning targets that are valued in the classroom; in turn, by creating assessments that are integrated with curriculum and instruction, we can improve student learning. To this end, we must develop scholarly investigations of:

- (1) What constitutes evidence of students' application of complex thinking skills and development of deep conceptual knowledge?
- (2) What kind of assessment tasks -- whether formative (e.g., a classroom group activity) or summative (e.g., such as a large-scale multiple-choice item) -- can ensure the desired evidence of complex thinking and deep conceptual understanding is elicited from students?

There are a multitude of research efforts underway to help us address these questions. These research efforts are, by definition, interdisciplinary as they must encompass discipline-specific research on the ways students acquire language or learn content and skills in physics, history, or math. We are pretty good at teaching and assessing declarative knowledge and process-oriented skills, but the calls for moving students towards more advanced learning continue to mount (see National Council for Research reports from 2000, 2001, and 2002 for a start). However, before we can do so effectively, we need to build a shared understanding of *what constitutes advanced learning? How do we know it when we see it?* Until we can answer these questions, specifically, for each discipline, we tend to fall back on teaching and assessment models that privilege the accumulation of facts and reward plug-and-

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Important Announcement Regarding the NERA *Researcher*

NERA is going green! In the past, a printed copy of the *Researcher* has been delivered to each member's preferred address. In accordance with NERA's commitment to sustainability, beginning with the September 2009 edition of the *Researcher*, members will now have the option of only receiving an electronic version of the newsletter. When members renew their NERA membership, they will be asked to indicate whether they would like to continue to receive a paper copy of the *Researcher* (these members will also receive an email with a link to the online newsletter), or whether they would like to only receive an e-mail with the link to each newly-published issue of the *Researcher*.

NERA 2009 Board of Directors

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Kristen Huff
The College Board
KHuff@collegeboard.org

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NERA 2009 Chairpersons

Committee Chairs:

**Lorne H. Woollott Distinguished
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Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award
Diane E. Liebert
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**Thomas Donlon Mentoring
Award**
Samantha Feinman
Pace University
sfeinman@pace.edu

Teacher-as-Researcher Award
Dolores Burton
New York Institute of Technology
dtburton@optonline.net

**Graduate Student Issues
Committee Chair:**
Megan France
James Madison University
francemk@jmu.edu

Membership Committee
John W. Young
Educational Testing Service
JWYoung@ets.org

Program Co-Chairs:
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The College Board
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**Save the Date:
October 21-23, 2009
NERA 40th Annual Conference
Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill in Rocky Hill, Connecticut**

The President's Message
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chug processes as examples of complex reasoning.

Building this shared understanding is difficult, and one reason is that language gets in the way. For example, I attended several sessions at AERA/NCME on developing learning progressions and cognitive models within specific disciplines. It became apparent, even among the most prominent thought-leaders in this area of research, that the following terms were being used in various ways, without common definitions: *learning progression, cognitive model, model of learning, process, skill, cognition, reasoning, thinking*. If those of us in the same field do not yet have a shared understanding of the foundation on which our research questions are based, how are we ever to build a shared understanding across disciplines, so that we can optimize the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to these research questions and others? In my mind, disambiguating the terms of our trade is the first step in developing this shared understanding. With that, I challenge you to explicitly define the terms you use in your scholarly endeavors, even if you assume that everyone should know and understand the term; also, avoid "educationese" or jargon that threatens our interactions with scholars in other fields. Clarity is a necessary precursor to establishing a shared understanding from which a rich, interdisciplinary body of research can emerge. Unlike the elderly woman and Dr. James who may never find the bottom turtle -- and don't necessarily need to -- we, as scientists, need a strong foundation for our scholarly endeavors; that is, we need to find our bottom turtle.



¹Various versions of this story exist. This version is cited, among other places, in Robert Wilson's *Prometheus Rising* (1997), New Falcon Press. I thank Linda Steinberg for introducing me to the story in one of our many discussions on the nature and role of evidence in educational assessment.

References

- National Research Council (2000). *How People Learn: Mind, Brain, Experience and School*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- National Research Council (2001). *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- National Research Council (2002). *Learning with Understanding: Improving Advanced Study of Mathematics and Science in U.S. High Schools*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Message from the Editors

Hello NERA Members! We hope that you enjoy this issue of the *NERA Researcher*. It is filled with important information concerning our 40th annual conference. Our conference co-chairs, Maureen Ewing, Liz Stone, and Peter Swerdzewski, are working on putting together an outstanding program, with a variety of pre-conference and in-conference sessions. We hope that you will submit one or more proposals and encourage your students and colleagues to do so as well. Remember,

the deadline for submitting proposals is June 5, 2009.

NERA is going green! Beginning with the next issue of the *Researcher*, all NERA members will have the option of only receiving the newsletter as a PDF file attached to an email. The paper edition of the *Researcher* will still be available to members who prefer to receive a hard copy, but we strongly encourage you to choose the email option.

As always, we are here to lis-

ten to your comments about the *Researcher* and we are open to all ideas and suggestions, so please keep them coming.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer,

Jennifer and Kevin
The Editors

Jennifer Kobrin
The College Board
jkobrin@collegeboard.org

Kevin Meara
Educational Testing Service
kmeara@ets.org

Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

Conference Theme: Using Educational Research to Improve Student Learning for 40 Years... *And Still Going Strong!*

Join us for the 2009 NERA conference as NERA prepares to enter its fifth decade of support for the educational research community. We hope that you will be able to be a part of our celebration of NERA's 40th birthday with exciting conference events.

We are thrilled to bring you addresses from our two excellent keynote speakers, Professor Mary M. Kennedy of Michigan State University, and President George A. Pruitt of Thomas Edison State College (NJ). NERA current and past presidents, including Kristen Huff, Kurt Geisinger, Sharon Cramer, David Moss, and Steve Sireci, will focus on publication in a session entitled *Strategies for Writing and Dissemination: Publishing is not rocket science, you CAN do it*. Additionally, we will feature pre-conference and in-conference training sessions spanning a variety of quantitative and qualitative educational research topics led by experts in the field.

- Pre-Conference Session A is *Fundamentals of Standard Setting*, and will be presented by Susan Cooper Loomis (National Assessment Governing Board) and Mary J. Pitoniak (Educational Testing Service).
- Pre-Conference Session B is on *Supporting Professional Development through Teacher Learning Communities: Research support, practical lessons learned, and evaluating the impact*, which will be presented by Caroline Wylie (Educational Testing Service).

In-conference sessions will include:

- *Grant Writing*, presented by Stan Shaw (University of Connecticut) and Michael Coyne (University of Connecticut);
- *Put Down the Highlighters! Qualitative Analysis Using NVivo 8*, presented by Kelly Godfrey (College Board); and
- *Classifying Persons Into Groups: An Introduction to Mixture Modeling and Considerations for Applied Practice*, presented by Dena Pastor (James Madison University).

We hope that you will be able to take advantage of these learning opportunities! **Note** that conference registration materials will ask whether you will likely attend or not attend one or both of the pre-conference sessions. This is purely for planning purposes, and we would appreciate your helping us obtain this information. We do not need to collect this information for in-conference sessions. Much more information about each of these sessions and speakers is contained in this June 2009 *Researcher*!

Graduate students will want to be involved in Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) events such as the Grad Student Panel, and some opportunities for formal mentoring will be offered. On the entertainment side, NERA's 40th birthday party is scheduled to be held on Thursday night, and we are planning to have a birthday cake in NERA's honor, as well as a group photo to commemorate NERA's 40th conference. Don't be left out! As part of the celebration of NERA, we are hoping to pull together photos from previous NERA conferences. If you have any pictures that are in (or that you

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Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

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can scan into) digital format, please let us know. We are also working on obtaining the services of bands that will entertain and provide the perfect ambience that you have come to expect based on last year's conference.

As always, we plan to update you on a continual basis, gradually filling in the gaps and fleshing out what promises to be another great NERA conference! But the key to a successful conference is the participation and support of its members. We hope you will plan to attend, and spread the word about this organization that continues to grow and develop. The conference can't be the collegial, stimulating gathering that we look forward to without both new and returning members who each give a bit of themselves to NERA. Please email the Chairs at neramembers@gmail.com if you would like to get involved and help out in some way but are not sure how to do it.

We also hope that you will spread the word about the NERA conference to your colleagues and within relevant professional contexts. New members and participants bring valuable new perspectives. If you have any ideas for publicizing the organization and conference (e.g., professional email lists to post the call for proposals and conference information to, or other organizations who might be willing to include NERA materials at their meetings or in their publications), please contact us.

We hope to see you in October!

2009 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Competition

In 1990, NERA renamed its distinguished paper award to honor Lorne H. Woollatt, a distinguished New York State educator and an active member of NERA. The award, now known as the Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award, is presented annually to a NERA member whose paper is deemed exemplary by the Award Committee.

Any paper reviewed and accepted by the Program Committee and presented at the 2009 NERA Annual Conference may be submitted for competition. Only one paper can be selected so the Committee is looking for an outstanding paper. We encourage submissions from those who received high marks or positive feedback from the Program Committee reviewers, your session's discussant or others. The winning paper will automatically be accepted for the 2010 AERA Annual Meeting as part of a session sponsored by the AERA/SIG: Consortium of State and Regional Educational Research Associations

(SRERA). The award also includes a monetary stipend to help defray the recipient's travel expenses to AERA.

If you wish to enter your paper into the competition, please email two copies of your paper to the 2009 Committee Chair, Craig Wells <cswells@educ.umass.edu> no later than October 30, 2009. Please send one BLIND copy of your paper and one copy with your name and the following information: affiliation, address, email address and phone number.

Please note that the paper is to be based on your NERA presentation and should not include information that differs substantially from that which you actually presented at the NERA conference. Papers in the Research-in-Progress sessions are not appropriate for submission. In addition, papers should be limited to no more than a total of 20 double-spaced pages (not including Tables/Figures or References).

Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

Pre-Conference Sessions

We are pleased to offer two pre-conference training sessions! The pre-conference sessions run from 10:00 am to 12:45 pm on Wednesday, October 21. These are great opportunities to learn in-depth about a topic taught by experts in the field — at no charge! We only ask that you indicate on the conference registration and membership form whether you plan to attend a pre-conference session.

Pre-conference Session A

Title: **Fundamentals in Standard Setting**

Presenters: Dr. Susan Cooper Loomis, National Assessment Governing Board;
Dr. Mary J. Pitoniak, Educational Testing Service

The purpose of the training session is to provide attendees with basic information about how to choose a standard-setting method, which methods are currently being used, and how to know if the cut scores set for an assessment yield valid interpretations within the context of a particular testing program. The first step will be to define what we mean by standard setting and clarify the different types of standards (absolute or relative) that can be set. Second, the typical steps in a standard setting will be described, from selecting a method and recruiting panelists through conducting the study and documenting the results. A detailed review of steps in several popular standard-setting methods (Bookmark, Angoff) will be provided. Information will also be provided on how to evaluate the validity of standard setting procedures and the resulting cut scores.



Dr. Susan Loomis is the National Assessment Governing Board's chief technical expert on all matters related to the design of the methodology of NAEP assessments and setting of achievement levels. She is also responsible for advising the Executive Director on the development and execution of policy matters related to the overall technical integrity of NAEP assessments.

Dr. Mary J. Pitoniak is a Lead Program Administrator in the Research and Development division at Educational Testing Service (ETS) and serves as the Associate Project Director for Research and Development for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). She co-authored the standard setting chapter in the 4th edition of *Educational Measurement*. She has also served on the Technical Advisory Committee on Standard Setting for NAEP, and co-conducted a workshop on standard setting at the annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education from 2005 through 2008.



Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

Pre-Conference Session B

Title: **Supporting Professional Development through Teacher Learning**

Communities: Research support, practical lessons learned, and evaluating the impact.

Presenter: Caroline Wylie, Educational Testing Service

Working with colleagues in the Learning and Teaching Research Center at ETS, Dr. Wylie has been focusing on supporting teachers' implementation of formative assessment. Teacher learning communities (or professional learning communities) provide a way of sustaining school-based, on-going professional development that teachers require in order to make changes to teaching practices. This session will address:

- Research on effective professional development
- Translating research into reality and lessons learned along the way
- *Evaluating the impact of TLCs*



Caroline Wylie is a research scientist in the Learning and Teaching Research Center at ETS. She received her doctorate in educational assessment from Queen's University, Belfast in 1996, and her post-graduate certificate in teaching (mathematics and information technology) in 1993. Current research centers around the use of formative assessment as a mechanism for improving teaching and learning in classrooms, and on issues related to the creation of effective, scaleable and sustainable teacher professional development.

In Conference Sessions

In addition to all of the great paper sessions, poster sessions, symposia, keynotes, and networking opportunities for which NERA is known, we are also offering training opportunities that will take place during the conference. These "in-conference sessions" are open to all conference attendees, are free of charge, and do not require pre-registration. The sessions are simply another way that NERA helps its members use and conduct educational research to improve student learning.

In-conference session A

Title: **Grant Writing** (sponsored by the Graduate Student Issues Committee)

Presenters: Dr. Shaw, University of Connecticut
Dr. Coyne, University of Connecticut

Abstract: This workshop will present practical steps for writing fundable grant proposals. It will begin with a discussion of general approaches to identifying grant opportunities in a timely fashion and initiating the grant writing process to enhance the likelihood of approval. The session will end with a focus on successful writing strategies for the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) research competitions.

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Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

In-conference session A (Continued from page 7)



Dr. Stan Shaw is Senior Research Scholar and Associate Director at the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Center on Postsecondary Education and Disability. He has been Project Director for more than six million dollars in grants implementing model demonstration projects, transition, inclusion and preparation of special education personnel.

Dr. Michael Coyne is associate professor and Program Coordinator of Special Education at the University of Connecticut. Dr. Coyne currently directs or co-directs three multi-year research grants funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences focused on optimizing vocabulary and beginning reading practices for students with diverse learning needs through school-based experimental research.



In-conference session B

Title: Put Down the Highlighters! Qualitative Analysis Using NVivo 8.

Presenter: Dr. Kelly Godfrey, College Board

Abstract: This session is a demonstration of QSR International's NVivo 8, a powerful qualitative data analysis tool that allows users to simultaneously code audio, video, picture, and text within one interface. The presentation will give an overview of the software's capabilities while highlighting its relevance to the field of educational research.



Dr. Kelly Godfrey is an Associate Research Scientist at the College Board. She received her doctoral degree from the Educational Research Methodology department at UNC Greensboro, and has been a trainer for QSR's qualitative analysis software for over 5 years. Her research focuses primarily in program evaluation, including mixed methods approaches, and psychometrics, including IRT and test equating.

In-conference session C

Title: Classifying Persons Into Groups: An Introduction to Mixture Modeling and Considerations for Applied Practice

Presenter: Dr. Dena Pastor, James Madison University

Abstract: Mixture models are increasingly being used in education and psychology to classify persons into unobserved groups (also known as *latent classes*) based on their values on a set variables. Although mixture modeling can be used with a wide variety of data, this session will focus specifically on the use of mixture modeling with cross-sectional continuous data. The similarities and differences between mixture modeling and other statistical techniques used for classification, such as cluster analysis and latent profile analysis, will be described.

The process of fitting mixture models using the Mplus software will be discussed, with particular attention paid to issues in model specification, estimation and fit. Additionally, issues that need to be considered in the applied use of these models will be reviewed. Specifically, participants will be alerted to the potential of finding interesting, but not meaningful or “real” classes and the debate surrounding the inclusion of covariates and outcomes in the model.



Dr. Dena A. Pastor has a dual appointment at James Madison University (JMU) as an Associate Professor in the Department of Graduate Psychology and as an Associate Assessment Specialist in the Center for Assessment and Research Studies. She received her doctoral degree in quantitative methods from the University of Texas in Austin in 2001 and has been teaching courses in measurement and statistics at JMU for over seven years. Her research typically involves the application of latent variable modeling to the study of college student learning and development.

Call for Nominations for the Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring

This award was created to recognize Tom Donlon's long and valued contributions to NERA, particularly as a mentor to so many colleagues. Presented for the first time in 2000, the award is given to someone identified for distinguished mentoring. The practice of mentoring in education has been going on for centuries, and so many scholars at Educational Testing Service, at Thomas Edison State College, in NERA and in countless professions are devoted to Tom for the guidance he provided them. Most of us can name a person who helped us along and was more than just a friend or a colleague. That person guided you, helped you find the right path and pointed you in the right direction and, perhaps, brought you to NERA your first time after suggesting that you might be ready for your first

conference presentation.

Nominees must be members of NERA and may be nominated by any member (or members) of NERA to whom they served as a mentor. If you would like to see a member of NERA who was your mentor be recognized for his/her contributions, nominations must be accompanied by documentation indicating the ways in which the nominee distinguished him/herself as a mentor. The award is presented at the annual NERA conference.

Nominations should be sent by August 1st to: Samantha Feinman, sfeinman@pace.edu. Please contact Ms. Feinman for any questions about the Donlon Award or the nomination process.

Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009

Registering for NERA's conference is quick and convenient:

- Go to the NERA website, <http://www.nera-education.org/>.
- Choose "Annual Conference." You'll find one link that will bring you directly to the membership and conference registration form and another link that will bring you to the Marriott Hotel's reservations page and the special conference rates.
- Pay for your conference registration and membership using PayPal, a very secure portal for online financial transactions. The NERA website also provides a link for downloading a registration and membership form, which you can print and mail along with a check if you prefer to register for the conference in this way. Note that the conference registration is free for graduate students, but graduate students must still register for the conference and **MUST** pay the \$15 annual membership dues.
- Reserve your room and meals for the conference by using the link for the Marriott Hotel.

Reserving Your Room at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill:

Conference attendees may reserve a double or triple and split the regular cost, or may reserve a single room. The Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill is offering us single occupancy rooms at \$200.44 per night plus tax, double occupancy rooms at \$277.88 per night plus tax, and triple occupancy rooms at \$355.32 per night plus tax. A room reserved for Wednesday night includes Wednesday dinner and Thursday breakfast and lunch; a room reserved for Thursday night includes Thursday dinner and Friday breakfast and lunch. To receive any of these special rates, reservations must be made by Wednesday, October 1, 2009 either through NERA's webpage or by calling 1-800-228-9290 and mentioning NERA.

The Conference Quad Rate for Graduate Students will continue to be offered along with free conference registration:

NERA continues to be an affordable choice for students. The Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill is offering a special Graduate Student quad rate of \$ 432.76., which includes meals and accommodations for four students per night, and thus comes to about \$108 per student. This special rate is available for graduate students **ONLY**. The graduate students are responsible for finding their roommates. One student will have to use a credit card to reserve the room for the quad. Remember, each graduate student must also register for the conference individually. Conference registration requires a separate on-line form available through the NERA website. Graduate students pay only \$15 for their annual membership dues, and pay no registration fee for the conference.

TEACHER-AS-RESEARCHER AWARD

Sponsored by
NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
40th Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009
at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, CT

The Teacher-as-Researcher Award is presented annually by the Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA). The award honors a teacher or a team that includes a teacher serving as a principle investigator, co-investigator, or collaborator who has conducted a classroom research project or applied research findings to inform his or her own teaching. The teacher should have primary responsibility for the research design that includes an application of a theory informing the study or the development of a theory from the results of a study, but not necessarily be the sole person in its development. The setting of the study should be part of the nominees' regular professional responsibilities (not as a student teacher or part of a dissertation) and the results should result in a change in practice. Evidence of the resulting change in practice should be documented by data presented by the nominee and should show that the teacher has applied theory to practice and that practice has changed.

The candidate can self nominate or be nominated by anyone who knows his or her work; NERA members, school administrators, faculty mentors, or others familiar with the teacher's work. All applications/nominations should follow the format of the Teacher-as-Researcher Award application form and be postmarked or emailed no later than June 15, 2009.

The 2009 awardee will be invited to speak about the research project at a special session at the annual NERA meeting in October 2009 and be presented with the award at that time. The award includes a plaque, NERA membership, \$150 toward travel, and two full-days of meals and lodging for one person at NERA's conference at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill.

Please send applications and address inquiries about the award to:

Dr. Dolores Burton, Chairperson

New York Institute of Technology

School of Education

Northern Blvd.

Old Westbury, New York 11568

Email: dburton@nyit.edu

Phone: 516 686 7582

Fax: 516 686 7655

For more information, see NERA web site at: www.nera-education.org

Interested in working with a NERA mentor? Or do you have advisees who might benefit from getting another scholar's perspective? By Tom Levine

NERA has always been a place where regional educational researchers can find and learn from each other, and where researchers-in-training can find opportunities and resources to compliment those at their home institutions. This year, at our annual conference, we're developing a more formal arrangement for mentoring to compliment the informal contacts and conversations you can find at our conference. If you are a graduate student - in any form - who might be interested in having a conversation with a NERA mentor about your work, please keep reading. Below, you will find short biographies of NERA mentors who have volunteered to read work by three or four mentees, to meet with them individually on Wednesday afternoon, and in some cases, to hold a group conversation with all of their mentees on Thursday afternoon.

What is expected of NERA Mentees and Mentors

1. Four weeks before our conference—right around the time of notification—four mentees will send their mentor and the other three members of their mentor group up to 20 pages (double spaced, normal font size) of their own work in progress. What they send could comprise a dissertation chapter, a portion of a dissertation proposal, a journal manuscript, a grant application, or any similar artifact of research.
2. Any mentee, by participating, agrees to read the three submissions from the three other mentees in advance of the conference.
3. A NERA mentee will spend 30 minutes in individual meetings with a NERA mentor. NERA mentors will come ready to offer whatever suggestions, constructive criticism, or questions they think might help a graduate student given the current stage of their work and ongoing growth.
4. We'll ask all involved to make suggestions regarding the format of the program as we decide whether to continue it and how we might support and improve it.

How to apply: Graduate students interested in participating should send an email titled "NERA Mentoring application" to neramembers@gmail.com by 9 p.m. on July 1, 2009. Please include, in the text of the email itself:

- Your name, position/role, and home institution or organization, [i.e., Joe Jones, Ph.D. candidate (Multicultural Education), University of Delaware.]
 - The topic of your research, described in a phrase or sentence.
 - The name of the mentor—from the group below—who you think would be the best fit for your work.
- a 150 to 300-word introduction to yourself, your research and/or methodological interests, and the work-in-progress you would like to contribute to a mentoring roundtable.

If we receive more requests for mentoring than one of our mentors can handle, we will choose randomly from those requests we judge to be a very good match for our mentors, and then will choose randomly from those mentees whose work we judge to be a reasonably good match. Our apologies in advance if, this year, we are unable to match all who are interested with a mentor.

Scott Brown, Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Connecticut

Over the course of his career, Dr. Brown has conducted research—and supported Ph.D. students' research—regarding cognition and instruction, learning in problem-based environments, instructional design, assessment and evaluation. He has experience with using—and advising others in the use of—both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. He has been awarded over \$9M in federal, state and private grants and currently directs the GlobalEd II project. Based on his experiences as an author and journal editor, he can also help graduate students preparing journal manuscripts in areas beyond his own research interests.

Sara Finney, Associate Professor, James Madison University

The majority of Dr. Finney's research involves the application of structural equation modeling to gather construct validity evidence for various self-report attitudinal/affective measures (e.g., achievement goals, social goals, academic motivation, self-efficacy). Additionally, she has studied various practical issues associated with structural equation modeling (e.g., non-normality, item parceling). Additional interests include the application of mixture modeling to explore possible taxonic structure, statistics education, and student learning and development outcome assessment in Student Affairs.

Graduate students whose research includes any of these areas will be given first preference to work with Dr. Finney; however, she encourages mentorship applications from students using more basic types of quantitative methods, including ANOVA, regression, and exploratory factor analysis. Professor Finney can discuss the appropriateness of your design, measurement, and analysis and/or issues related to reporting results.

Postcard *Número Tres* de Oviedo

By Lynn Shelley-Sireci

We are at our four-month anniversary of a sabbatical in Oviedo Spain, and we still learn something new every day. Part of our education has involved a number of side-trips to Italy, France, Andorra, and Southern Spain – and in case you were wondering, a vacation from sabbatical is as good as it sounds.

Lesson Uno: If you rent a “minivan” in Spain, you will probably get a white cargo-van. Steve and I took turns driving through Northern Spain, Southern France, and Andorra, while the kids shivered and bounced around on a bench seat in the uninsulated back of what looked like the type of van a terrorist rents. Keep in mind that European vehicles are standard transmission, and a cargo-van is particularly long and tall... now, you can now imagine the fun we had getting our terrorist’s van into underground parking garages with spiral ramps designed for compact cars (sort of like a toothpick going down a crazy straw). Let’s just say, there were many people behind us who were unhappy with *Los Americanos estúpidos*.

Lesson Dos: Italians are just like New Yorkers. On one of our side-trips we visited Italy. Upon our arrival in Rome we were immediately frustrated when our luggage took exceedingly long to appear on the carousel. Of course this has happened to us before; in fact it happened in Brussels and Spain, passengers always quietly stood and waited, while Steve and I fumed. But not in Rome – passengers hollered, paced, banged on the carousel, and although we don’t understand Italian curses, we can understand hand-gestures, and the hand gestures of one little old lady were definitely curse word equivalents. So, Steve and I immediately felt right at home. The comfortable feeling of being in a familiar place only increased as we maneuvered the city. To begin, we had to maintain an almost constant vigilance against pick-pocketers. Then in restaurants, we encountered sarcastic waiters, and finally our taxi rides were at break-neck speeds over bumpy cobbled streets (keep in mind we are 5 passengers in a car designed for 4). Steve and I loved every minute of it (although we are a little concerned about the long term effects on our children).



Ron Hambleton, José Muñiz, Steve Sireci, Lynn Shelley-Sireci, Alejandra Muñiz, and Else Hambleton debating the merits of IRT while in Oviedo Spain

Lesson Tres: If you build it well, it will last a really long time! In Rome we saw more history in the span of a ½ mile than in our entire lives. In the Vatican our older boys recognized and appreciated the art they saw, but it was only our five-year-old son who did what we all wanted to do – lay down on the floor in the middle of the Sistine Chapel, and look up. Pompeii was even more incredible than Rome. Books and documentaries do it no justice. The kids ran and climbed on everything – I was terrified they would knock down a wall, or break off a chunk of painted plaster. Fortu-

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(Postcard Numero Dos from Oviedo continued from page 13)

nately, if a volcano and 2000 years couldn't destroy it, neither could our kids. And finally, the Alhambra in Granada Spain was magical!

Lesson Cuarto: When friends offer something "authentic," say yes – not because you'll necessarily like it, but because you will learn from it. Visiting cathedrals, museums, parks and castles is fun, but often feels "touristy." We learned much more from the experiences our Spanish friends shared with us, such as going to a Turkish Bath and Massage (wonderful), a Flamenco show (fantastic), *Semana Santa* (holy week) Processions (beautiful), hiking in the Sierra Nevada (wow) and of course a Bull Fight (ugggh). We have also eaten every part of every creature imaginable, including goat, rabbit, partridge, venison, and every fish in the sea. But the "authentic" experience we love the

most is the Spanish tradition of going to a restaurant for hours and eating family style with a few dozen other people – it is such a pleasure for both parents and kids, especially since all parents pretend whichever kids are throwing food, punching siblings, or spilling drinks are not theirs.

Lesson Cinco: A good host can make your sabatical. Not only in Oviedo, but also during our trips through Northern Spain, Italy, and Southern Spain, old and new friends have generously put their lives on hold in order to help us and show us a good time. Seemingly small gestures, like inviting visitors to your home, sharing a meal, lending a cutting board, or helping someone open a bank account can mean a lot to a visitor – so please, invite visiting faculty over to your home and be sure to ask if they could use any of your old silverware or sheets.

Member News and Announcements

Dr. William E. Herman, Professor in the Department of Psychology at the State University of New York College at Potsdam, was invited to present a three-week graduate research seminar on "Motivation in Education" for the Department of Psychology at the University of Potsdam, in Germany in June, 2009. Dr. Herman was also invited to present a research seminar entitled "Motivation and Educational Achievement" for faculty members at the Department of Psychology at Liverpool Hope University in the United Kingdom on May 27, 2009.

Dr. John W. Young (ETS) delivered the 3rd annual Buros-ETS lecture on March 30th at the College of Education at the University of Nebraska entitled, "Ensuring Valid and Fair Content Assessments for Language Minority Students".

Congratulations to graduate students and faculty of James Madison University for their many accomplishments!

Carol Barry received the Outstanding Scholarship Award (doctoral-level) from JMU's Department of Graduate Psychology. In addition, she was awarded a 2009-2010 internship with the College Board, to begin in August 2009.

Allie Brown received the Outstanding Scholarship Award (M.A.-level) from JMU's Department of Graduate Psychology.

Megan France was awarded an ETS Summer Internship; she will be working with Richard Roberts in the Center for New Constructs. Megan also received the ACPA national award for Emerging Best Practices in Assessment and the Outstanding Service Award (doctoral-level) from JMU's Department of Graduate Psychology.

Mary Johnston successfully defended her thesis on April 6th ("Measuring Basic Needs Satisfaction: Evaluating Previous Research and Conducting New Psychometric Evaluations of the Basic Needs Satisfaction Scale") and received her M.A. on May 8th.

Andrew Jones successfully defended his dissertation on April 7th ("Using the Right Tool for the Job: An Analysis of Item Selection Statistics for Criterion-Referenced Tests") and received his PhD on May 8th. In June he will move to the Philadelphia area where he will join the American Board of Surgery as a psychometrician.

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Pamela Kaliski successfully defended her dissertation on April 3rd ("An Empirical Demonstration of Direct and Indirect Applications of Mixture Modeling When Studying Personality Traits: A Methodological-Substantive Synergy") and received her Ph.D. on May 8th.

Abby Lau received the Outstanding Teaching Award (doctoral-level) from JMU's Department of Graduate Psychology. Abby accepted a position at the College of the Holy Cross as a Project Coordinator for a three-year grant funded by the Teagle Foundation.

Ross Markle was awarded an ETS Summer Internship. He will be working with Cathy Wendler and Brent Bridgeman in Foundational and Validity Research.

Javarro Russell was selected to serve as an intern this summer with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. He will be working with Vernon Harper on developing new reporting procedures for state universities.

Christine Harmes was granted tenure and promotion to Associate Professor effective in June 2009.

Report from the NERA Membership Committee

John Young, Chair

1. About 100 copies of the flier announcing the 2009 conference was distributed at various venues during AERA.
2. We are still working on posting the call for proposals on each of the AERA division listservs and the NCME listserv.
3. We will be sending the call for proposals to staff at several local departments of education and to the local and national associations for institutional researchers.

Encourage your colleagues to join NERA!

Membership in NERA introduces you to a community of educators who are interested in all aspects of educational research. More than 300 people attended the 39th annual conference held in October 2008. NERA welcomes experienced researchers, junior faculty, and graduate students. If you were not able to attend our annual meeting, you are still eligible to join NERA or to renew your membership. Membership will ensure that you remain updated on NERA initiatives

and continue your association with colleagues and friends. You will also have a head start on our 2009 Conference.

New members can join NERA, and current members can renew their membership online at <http://www.nera-education.org/membership.php>. New and current members may also download a membership form from the NERA website if you prefer to mail in your membership application. If you have any questions about membership or the organization, please feel free to contact Dr. Barbara Helms, Treasurer (members@nera-education.org) or any of the other NERA Board members.

NERA Membership	
Professional	183
Retirees	8
Graduate Students	129

The Graduate Lounge

Top 10 Reasons for graduate students to go to NERA (By the Graduate Student Issues Committee)

1. It's a great opportunity to present your research and get feedback.
2. There are many opportunities for students to get involved with the NERA community (e.g., join a committee, build relationships with professionals and other graduate students in the field, collaborate on educational research endeavors).
3. Registration for NERA graduate students is FREE! (On average at other conferences, student conference registration is \$100 or more.)
4. NERA is a great opportunity for professional development. As a graduate student you can take advantage of: learning from other people's paper/poster sessions, the FREE pre-conference and in-conference sessions, the graduate student sponsored sessions, and the mentoring program.
5. Because NERA is a smaller conference, it is easier to network and meet professionals in the field.
6. There are special hotel quad rates just for NERA graduate students (this includes the hotel room and all three meals).
7. There will be FREE appetizers at the Graduate Student Social.
8. NERA is low-stress, the organization is known for its inviting and supportive attitude toward graduate students.
9. Graduate students get FREE drink tickets.
10. Help eat NERA's 40th birthday cake!

The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) of the Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) would like to congratulate Megan France from James Madison University for winning the 2008 Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award Competition. The winning paper is entitled "What Matters in the Measurement of Mattering? A Confirmatory Factor Analysis". The abstract of the paper appears below.

We would like to thank the graduate students who participated in this competition, as well as all the NERA members who volunteered to review the papers. All papers were of high quality. Special thanks to Asil Ozdogru, who initiated and coordinated this award, and to Lynn Shelley (GSIC Advisor) for her support and guidance.

Paper title: What Matters in the Measurement of Mattering? A Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Author: Megan K. France Co-author: Sara J. Finney

Abstract: Universities are increasingly concerned with issues of student mental health. Fostering a sense of mattering within students may help to decrease these mental health issues. Mattering is the feeling that we are significant and make a difference in the lives of others. However, the measurement of mattering has been lacking. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the psychometric properties of a measure of mattering. Using CFA, five theoretically-based competing models were tested. The results supported a four-factor model. Recommendations for improvement of the measure are made, as well as the necessity for gathering external validity.

Highlights of the NERA Board of Directors' Meetings January 23 and 24, 2009

Rocky Hill Marriott, Rocky Hill Connecticut
Submitted by Darlene Perner, NERA Secretary

Date: January 23, 2009 (1:30 p.m.)

Present: K. Huff, D. Moss, T. Patelis, M. France, B. Helms, D. Burton, B. Wert, H. Marx, M. Ewing and P. Swerdzewski (Program Co-Chairs for 2009), A. Zenisky, S. Finney, and D. Perner; Conference call: L. Stone (Program Co-Chair for 2009) and J. Young

1. **Welcome and Approval of the Minutes:** K. Huff welcomed members and the minutes from the October 22 and 24, 2008 board meetings were approved.

2. **Treasurer's Report:** B. Helms distributed the treasurer's report. She stated that 320 members (182 professional, 8 retirees, 130 graduate students) have joined or renewed their membership for 2008-09 year and 306 members (171 professional, 7 retirees and 128 graduate students) registered for the 2008 conference. Requests will be made for "institutional memberships" instead of "sponsorships." The treasurer's report was accepted.

3. **2008 Conference Report:** H. Marx reported that 21 papers have been uploaded to *Proceedings from the 2008 NERA Conference* on Digital Commons at UCONN. Helen developed a sponsorship package. Approximately 146 proposals and 18 symposia were submitted for this conference. A two year contract has been negotiated with excellent rates. The 2008 conference report was accepted.

4. **Nominations:** D. Moss reported that electronic balloting will be instituted for the 2009 election. The positions open for the 2009 election are president, secretary, and two board of directors. B. Helms will resign at the end of this year. H. Marx has been appointed to fulfill the remaining treasurer's term until election in 2010. A motion to move the position of treasurer from an elected position to an appointed position and to follow this change as guided by the NERA by-laws was approved.

5. **Membership Committee Report:** K. Huff announced that J. Young is the newly appointed membership committee chair. J. Young reported that the committee will focus on inviting universi-

ties relatively close to the conference location and target other organizations/groups including teachers and doctoral students.

6. **2009 Conference Report:** L. Stone reported that 52 evaluations were returned. Overall the respondents felt the 2008 conference was excellent. P. Swerdzewski reported information regarding the conference keynotes and sessions. The discussion role will be made flexible and there will be discussants for poster sessions.

Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm

Date: January 24, 2009 (8:30 a.m.)

Present: K. Huff, D. Moss, T. Patelis, M. France, D. Burton, B. Wert, M. Ewing, P. Swerdzewski, A. Zenisky, S. Finney, and D. Perner; Conference call: L. Stone, H. Marx, J. Kobrin and K. Meara (for *The NERA Researcher* report)

6. **2009 Conference Report (cont.):** M. Ewing presented the conference budget which was approved. Another motion was made and approved to change the graduate student position from a representative status to a full voting member of the board, and to follow this change as guided by the NERA by-laws. Abstracts will be deleted from the printed program.

7. **A NERA Journal:** D. Moss gave a report on the status of having a NERA journal. There may be a possibility of using a *Conference Proceedings* format as a prototype to get the concept of a NERA journal started.

8. **Teacher as Researcher (TAR) Report:** D. Burton distributed the TAR report and application for the award. She reviewed some of the changes including one of the criteria for the individual making the submission: "...but not necessarily be the sole person in its development."

9. **The NERA Researcher Report:** K. Meara and J. Kobrin stated that there have been many submissions and responses from membership to write articles and invited articles are now being in-

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cluded. Discussion focused on paper vs. electronic copies of the newsletter. D. Moss suggested that members should be able to request their preference to receive the *Researcher* as just an electronic copy from the Web site. K. Huff will work out the details.

9. District/State Task Force Report: T. Patelis distributed the report and discussed the recommendations. The committee will determine a budget proposal for the 2009 conference and include researchers from NERA in the proposed conference meeting with research and test directors.

10. Graduate Student Issues Committee Report (GSIC): M. France distributed the GSIC report. There are two new members this year: Allison Brown and Marisa Cohen. The committee has been developing its role and responsibilities and has discussed the need for more diverse representation. There were eight papers submitted for the Best Paper Award and the recipient will be announced soon. The committee is focused on working with the other NERA committees and with planning social events for the conference.

The meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Highlights of the Minutes of the NERA Board Meeting Conference Call

Submitted by Darlene Perner, NERA Secretary

Date: February 25, 2009 (3:30 p.m.)

Present: K. Huff, M. Ewing, S. Finney, M. France, B. Helms, D. Perner, L. Shelley-Sireci, L. Stone, P. Swerdzewski, and A. Zenisky

1. Welcome. K. Huff welcomed members and stated she will represent the input from K. Nottis and D. Burton from their conference call (Feb. 23rd).

2. Online/Web site responsibilities. B. Helms will continue as the editor of the NERA Web site.

3. Diversity Task Force Report. The board recommended that a task force member organize a NERA Panel and/or Symposium which would focus on diversity research. There was an indication that we need a broader definition of diversity. Some recommendations will be acted upon but recommendations should be developed to increase diversity over time.

4. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Report. It was suggested that a flyer, which would provide information about the award, be inserted when the notice of proposal acceptance is e-mailed by the program co-chairs. The committee should establish specific guidelines to advertise this award (prior to, during, and after the conference).

5. Review of Committee Analysis Report. A. Zenisky and S. Finney gathered information about the NERA committees from committee chairs and the NERA Handbook. From the data they presented a number of issues about the NERA committees and roles of board members were discussed. It was recommended that a task force be established to review NERA Committees and to make recommendations regarding the committees and their structures.

6. Funds for GSIC Committee. It was moved and accepted that a GSIC budget line for \$200 be established in the NERA operations budget.

7. NERA Reception at AERA. The general consensus was that there should not be a NERA reception at AERA.

Conference Call meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Get Involved in the NERA 2009 Conference!

If you have been interested in getting more involved with NERA, or just want to help out with the conference, please contact the Chairs at neramembers@gmail.com. Any assistance is greatly appreciated, so whether you want to volunteer for a specific role, or you are looking for some guidance about how you can do more for NERA, please let us know. You have probably received participation forms, either at the 2008 conference or through e-mail, but we will also be reaching out for some help with additional conference tasks. Help us make the 2009 NERA conference the best it can be!

Book Review

Stivers, J.L. & Cramer, S. F. (2009). *A Teacher's Guide to Change: Understanding, Navigating, and Leading the Process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Reviewed by
Christine Denecker
The University of Findlay

According to an ancient proverb, “change is the only constant,” and most educators would likely attest to the reliability of that saying. An educator’s world turns on change. From national mandates such as NCLB as well as state standards, curricular reforms, and strategic plans to local shifts in teaching assignments, schedules, and classroom composition—change is always occurring in education. Sometimes that change is imposed; at other times it derives from creativity, need, or want. However, just because change is a common facet of education does not mean that all educators inherently and deftly know how to deal with it. To this point, Janet L. Stivers and Sharon F. Cramer offer *A Teacher's Guide to Change: Understanding, Navigating and Leading the Process*.

A practical, hands-on book for educators, *A Teacher's Guide to Change*, combines research literature with the voices of over 100 surveyed teachers to provide a balanced view of how change can certainly be unnerving, challenging, and frustrating but ultimately empowering and *powerful* when approached reflectively and pragmatically. In their text, Stivers and Cramer urge readers to open themselves to the possibilities of change and to draw on their own experiences as well as the experiences of others in order to view change as an opportunity for professional growth. Noting that most research to this point has focused on educational change from an administrative perspective, the authors target teachers as their audience and suggest that when teachers are actively engaged in questioning, planning, and implementing change—whether the change moves top-down or bottom-up—they, as well as their school districts and students, benefit more profoundly.

Organized in five parts, *A Teacher's Guide to Change* first challenges readers to reflect on changes they have experienced in both their professional and personal lives in order to develop a better understanding of how they, as individuals, ap-

proach and deal with change. In Part II, “Understanding the Change Process,” readers are invited to explore reasons why teachers often resist change and under what circumstances that resistance should be resolved, learned from, and/or respected. Parts III and IV underscore the empowerment teachers experience when they undertake the challenge to pursue and enact professional or pedagogical changes. This empowerment can lead to larger initiatives that expand beyond the classroom as discussed in Parts IV and V, “Leading Change,” and “Changing Throughout a Career in Teaching.”

Vignettes from teachers representing the wide spectrum of an educator’s career drive the heart of the text and reinforce its tangibility and relatability. Likewise, its “Change Challenges” and “Needs Survey” exercises enable it to function as a thoughtful and relevant tutorial for educators who want to take control of rather than be controlled by change. Suitable for candidates in teacher preparation programs as well as veterans in the field, Stivers’ and Cramer’s work underscores that while educational change is inevitable and even essential, it need not be daunting. Instead, change just might be the one constant that ensures that an educator’s world continues to revolve and evolve in meaningful ways.

Author:

Dr. Christine Denecker is an Associate Professor of English at The University of Findlay (Findlay, Ohio) and the director of UF’s Teaching Academy within its Center for Teaching Excellence. A former public high school English teacher, Denecker’s research interests include multimodal composition, technological pedagogies in language arts, secondary and post-secondary teaching methods, and dual enrollment.

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