

# The NERA Researcher

## The President's Message



Charlie DePascale

MAKE NERA GREAT AGAIN because WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER

We will soon assemble in Trumbull to reunite and rejuvenate as we reconvene the NERA annual meeting. We come together this year in a time of great transitions—for the nation, for our field, and for our organization.

As I allude to in the title of this message, as the conference begins on October 26, the seemingly interminable 2016 presidential election will be entering its final two weeks. Every time we elect a new President, there is a mix of excitement and uneasiness about what lies ahead. Most of the time, those feelings dissipate quickly as we settle in with a new administration and life goes on as before. This is one of those points in our history, however, when there is a sense that regardless of which candidates and parties win the national elections, there are going to be significant changes to the status quo.

In education, too, this is a time of change. We are still in the early stages of interpreting and understanding the potential impact of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—the latest iteration of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We are just beginning to get a sense of the ways in which ESSA will affect our ongoing efforts to meet the ever changing and challenging goals of equity and excellence. Significant changes to our current model of higher education feel inevitable. At the K-12 level, advances in and the pervasiveness of technology have renewed the focus on the elusive concept of personalized learning and individualized instruction. There is also a better understanding that the most critical portion of a child's education may occur prior to entering the K-12 system. And it appears that we have reached a tipping point with regard to the use of external, standardized testing for accountability. There is a realization that real information and knowledge about student performance resides in the schools with students and teachers. Of course, only time will tell whether this is yet another instance of *be careful what you wish for or the devil you know*. What role will we, as educational researchers, and NERA, as a research organization, play in ensuring that a decade from now people are not yearning for the good old days of school accountability based on a single, annual state assessment?

That is the question that brings us to NERA and our transitions. Throughout this year, we have described the transitions that the NERA board has undertaken over the last few years not necessarily to make NERA great again, but to maintain and build upon the values and beliefs that always have made NERA great. Chief among those, is the belief that we are stronger together. NERA functions best when we can bring together diverse researchers with diverse research interests and provide an environment that facilitates and encourages the sharing of our work and ideas—an environment that is supportive but also challenges each of us to grow and learn. As discussed at length in my spring message, this year we have implemented a change to the conference registration fee structure in an attempt to make the full conference experience more accessible to all members. Of course, there is more to facilitating the

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## The NERA Researcher

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

### Message from the Editors

Hello NERA Members!

We hope everyone has enjoyed a great summer! Alas, it is time to bid summer farewell and look forward to fall which brings us its beautiful foliage, pumpkin spice lattes, and our favorite gathering of educational professionals, the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Northeastern Educational Research Association! This issue of *The NERA Researcher* is full of conference details, including updates from your conference co-chairs, conference membership and registration information, and conference highlights. Also included are updates and announcements from several of our standing committees.

We would also like to highlight a feature article on applying Krueger and Casey's classic approach to focus group data analysis by Dr. Felice D. Billups. Additionally, Dr. Howard Everson, has submitted an obituary for Dr. Roscoe Brown, a former NERA president and Board Member.

As always, a very special thank you to Barbara J. Helms for providing an extra set of eyes on the newsletter!

We look forward to another wonderful conference!

Haifa Matos-Elfonte and Katherine Reynolds  
The Editors

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sharing of ideas than bringing people together for meals and plenary sessions.

A primary function of a research organization and research conference is the sharing of our work not only through ephemeral presentations but also through papers and in-depth interactions. At a recent NERA business meeting, a longstanding NERA member decried unintended consequences that have resulted from the shift to PowerPoint and the digital age. Printed copies of completed papers and/or detailed handouts were once a staple of research conferences. They have been replaced by the new normal of a final slide with the author's e-mail address and perhaps a printed handout with three slides per page that cannot be read without a magnifying glass. Time marches on, and we are not proposing a return to paper handouts. We do agree strongly, however, that the exchange of tangible, lasting information is a critical component of the exchange of ideas.

Toward that end, at the 2016 conference we will introduce the digital NERA Conference App. The conference app contains features that will make it possible for presenters to upload presentations, papers, or related information so that they can be easily accessed by other attendees. The app will also make it easier for attendees to communicate directly with each other to ask follow-up questions or to request additional information. We have selected a proven platform that has been used at other conferences (e.g., NCME) and believe that the use of the app will move us closer to an open exchange of information and ideas among NERA members.

In addition to the features described above, the conference app also facilitates the sharing of information about schedules, presenters, and presentations; in other words, the information that was provided in a printed program. Therefore, we will not be printing and disseminating copies of a printed program at the conference this year. Resources that would have been dedicated to printing the program have been reallocated to the conference app. I could offer cost and environmental arguments in support of not providing a printed program, but the bottom line is that we believe that the conference app is the most efficient and effective way to provide needed information about the conference. We do understand, however, that some people prefer paper materials and that some institutions require presenters to provide printed documentation of their participation in the conference. For that reason, we are producing a master copy of the traditional paper program that will be posted to the NERA website and provided as a pdf file, as in previous years.

In closing my final President's Message, it would be remiss of me to neglect to mention that the principle that we're stronger together is best reflected through the member volunteers who commit their time, energy, and incredible talents to enable NERA to support its members day-to-day, month-to-month, and year-to-year. As a member of the NERA Board from 2011–2014, I had the opportunity to interact several times per year with a combination of newcomers like myself and NERA veterans who have been devoted to NERA throughout their entire professional career. I was also exposed to the NERA infrastructure—the committee system—the network of volunteers who perform tasks such as producing this newsletter, maintaining the website, coordinating communications, recruiting new members and supporting current members, and maintaining the coordinated online systems for proposal submissions and reviews, conference registration, and the membership database. As President, I have had the opportunity to interact with our institutional members. Without their ongoing generous support and commitment to NERA we would not have been able to even consider the changes that we implemented in recent years.

Since becoming President-elect at the 2014 conference, I have had the wonderful opportunity to work with past-President April Zenisky, President-elect Craig Wells, former Treasurer Liz Stone, current Treasurer Steven Holtzman, and the 2016 conference team: Molly Faulkner-Bond, Joshua Marland, and Scott Monroe. There is no doubt that serving on the NERA Board and leadership team has been a highlight of my professional career.

I look forward to enjoying the fruition of their work with you in Trumbull.

## Member News

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

Submissions may be sent to [theneraresearcher@nera-education.org](mailto:theneraresearcher@nera-education.org).

## NERA 2016 Conference Highlights

The following presents an overview of the conference schedule and listing of special sessions.  
Please see the conference program for a complete schedule and description of all conference sessions.

### Wednesday, October 26

#### **Morning**

Pre-Conference Workshops

- Propensity Score Matching
- Evidence-Centered Design

#### **Afternoon**

Workshops

- Writing and submitting a journal article in 12 weeks
- Qualitative/Mixed Methods

Invited Panel: *Extreme Standard Setting*

Concurrent Sessions

#### **Evening**

Graduate Student Social

Keynote Address by Jonathan Supovitz

Welcome Reception with Jazz Quartet

### Thursday October 27

#### **Morning**

Introduction to Data Visualization Workshop

Concurrent Sessions

#### **Afternoon**

Keynote Address by Lee Badgett

GSIC Sponsored Session on Grant Writing

Plenary Panel – Making an Impact at the National Level

Concurrent Sessions

#### **Evening**

NERA Awards Presentations

NERA Presidential Address by Charlie DePascale: Living in a Post-Validity World: Cleaning up our Messick

Reception with DJ and Photo Booth

### Friday, October 28

#### **Morning**

NERA Business Meeting

GSIC Sponsored Session on Writing a Curriculum Vitae

Invited Panel: *Growth – You get it, right?*

Scale Development Workshop

Special Interactive Session Formats

- Information Blitz
- Poster Forum

Concurrent Sessions

Plenary Panel – Making an Impact at the State and Local Level

Farewell Lunch

## 2016 NERA Conference Announcement

October 26-28, 2016  
Trumbull, Connecticut

*Making an Impact: Effectively Communicating the Results of Educational Research*

After reviewing the nearly 200 proposals received in June, the program for the 2016 NERA conference is set! Many thanks to all who submitted proposals to share their work with us and to all who volunteered their time this summer to review proposals. As we have said many times, there would be no conference without all of you.

From Wednesday through Friday, there will be more than 50 sessions across broad areas such as teacher practice, education policy, postsecondary education, educational measurement, curriculum and instruction, educational leadership, and teacher education. The sessions are organized in a variety of formats, allowing for varying degrees of interaction between presenters and audience members:

### *Paper sessions:*

- Traditional sessions in which 3-5 papers are presented followed by comments from a discussant and questions from the audience.

### *Symposia:*

- Theme-based paper sessions in which 3-5 papers are organized around a single theme.

### *Information Blitz:*

- There will be two Information Blitz sessions in which the first 30 minutes of the session is devoted to presenters providing a brief overview of their research. For the remaining hour of the session, audience members are able to interact directly with an individual presenter or presenters.

### *Roundtable:*

- There will also be a Roundtable session which allows for maximum interaction among presenters and between presenters and audience members.

### *Poster Forum:*

- This format will combine features of the Information Blitz and a traditional poster session. Poster presenters will prepare brief PowerPoint presentations that will be available for viewing throughout the conference and then will be available at their posters for discussion during the Poster Forum session.

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## *Plenary Sessions*

Throughout the conference, there will be four plenary sessions addressing various aspects of the conference theme—Making an Impact. Two of the plenary sessions will feature keynote addresses by Jonathan Supovitz and Lee Badgett. The remaining two plenary sessions will feature our invited panelists discussing ways in which researchers can or should be Making an Impact at the National and State/Local Levels.

### Keynote Speakers:

**Jonathan Supovitz** is co-director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) and a professor in education policy and teaching at the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. He is co-author of the #commoncore Project – How social media is changing the politics of education:

*The Common Core has become a flashpoint at the nexus of education politics and policy, fueled by ardent social media activists. To explore this phenomenon, this innovative and interactive website examines the Common Core debate through the lens of the influential social media site Twitter. Using a social network perspective that examines the relationships among actors, we focus on the most highly used Twitter hashtag about the Common Core: #commoncore. The central question of our investigation is: How are social media-enabled social networks changing the discourse in American politics that produces and sustains social policy?*

**Lee Badgett** is a professor of Economics and Director of the Center for Public Policy and Administration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is author of the book, *The Public Professor – How to Use Your Research to Change the World*:

*The work of academics can matter and be influential on a public level, but the path to becoming a public intellectual, influential policy advisor, valued community resource or go-to person on an issue is not one that most scholars are trained for. The Public Professor offers scholars ways to use their ideas, research and knowledge to change the world. The book gives practical strategies for scholars to become more engaged with the public on a variety of fronts: online, in print, at council hearings, even with national legislation.*

### Invited Panelists

**National Panel** – Our national panel will feature three individuals whose work touches on the meaning and impact of educational research at the national level: Julianne Baron, Director of Government Relations for AERA, Jill Barshay, contributing editor and author of the weekly column, *Education By The Numbers*, for *The Hechinger Report*, and Lee Badgett.

**State and Local Panel** – Our state and local panel will feature three individuals whose work touches on the meaning and impact of educational research at the state and local levels: Carrie Conaway, Associate Commissioner, Office of Planning and Research for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Kara Chesal, Senior Director Strategic Partnerships & Industry Engagement at the NYC Department of Education; and Sarah Darville, national editor and former New York bureau chief for *Chalkbeat New York*.

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## *Workshops*

Beginning with two pre-conference workshops on Wednesday morning, October 26, we are pleased to offer six professional development workshops throughout the conference. Complete descriptions of each of the workshops are available on the NERA website.

- **Propensity Score Matching**, Heather Harris, James Madison University
- **Scale Development**, Liz Pyburn, James Madison University
- **Using Mixed Methods to Tell the Whole Story**, Robert Gable and Felice Billups, Johnson and Wales University
- **Evidence-Centered Design**, Kristen Huff, Curriculum Associates
- **Introduction to Data Visualization**, Damian Betebenner, Center for Assessment
- **Writing and Submitting a Journal Article in 12 Weeks**, Mary Grasseti, Framingham State University

## *Invited Panel Discussions on “Timely Topics”*

We have invited experts from within the NERA community to join panel discussions on two topics on which there is a great deal of interest as well as an abundance of technical and policy challenges.

**Extreme Standard Setting** – As a field, we barely have our heads around standard setting on traditional large-scale assessments and now the landscape has exploded. Panelists will address issues such as standard setting across grade levels, for college- and career-readiness, on assessments of higher-order complex skills, on non-standardized assessments, and validating standards for new assessment programs and accountability systems.

**Growth – You get it, right?** – It all seemed so simple in 2005 when states wanted to include growth in their assessment and accountability systems. Then it got real. What is growth? How do we measure it? How much is good enough? Who is responsible for it? The panel will discuss these issues as well as how we grow from here.

## *Conference App*

We are very excited to introduce to the conference this year a conference app which will facilitate interactions among NERA members at the conference as well as allow researchers to easily share their slides and papers with their colleagues.

## *Mentoring*

A key part of every NERA conference, the mentoring program provides graduate students with the opportunity to meet with professionals in the field. Mentors can provide individualized feedback on research projects and/or dissertations, as well as provide guidance during the conference. An opportunity for participants in the mentoring program to forget about those research projects and dissertations for an hour will be provided on Thursday afternoon.

Please see the conference highlights in this edition of the Researcher and visit the Conference tab on the NERA website for additional information about the conference. We look forward to seeing you in Trumbull! Email us if you have any questions: [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com)

Thank you!

Molly Faulkner-Bond, *University of Massachusetts– Amherst*  
Joshua Marland, *Highlander Institute*  
Scott Monroe, *University of Massachusetts– Amherst*  
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## Becoming a Member and Registering for the 2016 Conference

All attendees of the 2016 NERA Conference must be current NERA Members. If you have not already done so, you must either join NERA or renew your membership before you can register for the conference.

### *Becoming a Member or Renewing Your NERA Membership*

To become a member or renew your membership, please go to the NERA website <http://www.nera-education.org/>. If you need to renew your membership, you may also use the link provided in the renewal invoice sent via e-mail in June.

The membership dues for the next year (October 15, 2016 – October 14, 2017) are as follows:

Professional members – \$40  
Full-time student members – \$15  
Retired members – \$15

### *Registering for the 2016 Conference*

Once you have become a new member or renewed your membership, you can register for the event at the following link:  
[http://www.viethconsulting.com/members/evr/reg\\_event.php?orgcode=NERA&evid=14898303](http://www.viethconsulting.com/members/evr/reg_event.php?orgcode=NERA&evid=14898303)

We are pleased to announce that conference registration this year covers your meals. This is a change from previous years, when meals were bundled into the price of hotel rooms or had to be purchased at the conference. As a result of this change, registration fees are higher this year than in the past, but hotel rates are considerably lower (and are priced per room, rather than per person). We believe this change will improve the conference experience and will result in lower total costs for most attendees.

Because all meals are included in registration fees, we need accurate estimates of how many people will attend each meal at the hotel. So, during the registration process, you will be asked which meals you plan to attend at this time.

Similarly, we need estimates of how many people will attend the pre-conference and in-conference workshops. During registration, you will be asked which workshops you plan to attend.

All online conference registration fees are processed through PayPal. However, you do not have to have a PayPal account to make a payment. You may pay by credit card on the secure PayPal site.

Please note that to receive the regular registration rate, **you must register for the conference by October 1st!** After this date, a late fee will be added to the regular rates. The following are the registration fees for this year:

#### **2016 Conference Registration Fees – On or Before October 1st (after October 1st):**

Professional member - \$185.00 (\$210.00)  
Full-time Student - \$60.00 (\$85.00)  
Retired member - \$120.00 (\$120.00)

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# NERA

## NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

### ***Registering for the Trumbull Marriott***

Finally, don't forget to register for the hotel by October 4<sup>th</sup> to ensure you get the discounted rate of \$137 per night. You can find the link to register for the hotel on the NERA website under the Conference section. It is a NERA-specific link that will ensure you get the discounted rate. You may also call the hotel at 1.800.682.4095, and tell them you are attending the NERA conference.

### ***Participating at the Conference***

Please consider serving as a discussant or session chair. If you are interested, please sign up via the following link:  
<https://www.viethconsulting.com/members/form.php?orgcode=NERA&fid=2480339>

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com).

We look forward to seeing everyone at NERA in October.

Thank you,

Molly Faulkner-Bond, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*  
Joshua Marland, *Highlander Institute*  
Scott Monroe, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*  
NERA 2016 Conference Co-Chairs



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## In Memoriam: Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, former NERA President and Board Member

Howard T. Everson  
SRI International

Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, a scholar and civil rights leader who served NERA in its early years, as both a board member and president (1964 through 1968), died in New York on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 at the age of 94.

Roscoe Brown, known affectionately by many as the *Captain*, was a distinguished scholar and educator. In addition to providing a steady hand at the helm of NERA, Dr. Brown held a variety of leadership posts in academia. Until his retirement in late 2015, Dr. Brown was University Professor and Director of the Center for Urban Education Policy at the Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York (CUNY). He served as the president of the Bronx Community College—a two-year institution within the CUNY system that became a national model of innovation in higher education under his leadership. During his 17 years as president, Dr. Brown intensified the College's outreach to New York City's economic and educational institutions through partnerships with business and industry. With his leadership, new programs were developed in the fields of health, technology and human services.

Early in his academic career, Roscoe Brown earned his scholarly reputation as the founding Director of the Institute of Afro-American Affairs at New York University. He held a doctorate in Education from New York University, and served on the faculty at West Virginia State College, and as a full professor at New York University's School of Education. A native of Washington, D.C., Dr. Brown graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, and received his Bachelor's degree from Springfield College in Massachusetts.

While in high school he was inspired by the adventures of Charles Lindbergh, and his plane the *Spirit of St. Louis*, to become an aviator. In his early twenties, fresh out of college, he joined the US Army Air Forces and began his illustrious tour of duty in World War II as a *Tuskegee Airman*. As a First Lieutenant, Brown was one of three members of the 332nd Fighter Group credited with shooting down a Messerschmitt Me 262 jet fighter. Subsequently, Brown was promoted to Captain and squadron commander and later received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with Eight Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

The *Captain* is legendary for flying 68 combat missions as a fighter squadron commander of the nation's belatedly celebrated first black military aviators, known as the *Tuskegee Airmen*, based in Tuskegee, AL. Always a pioneer, Dr. Brown was one of the first African-American pilots in the U.S. military and a highly decorated member of the *Tuskegee Airmen*. The *Captain* served his country with great distinction in World War II and later as a leading champion for civil rights. In March 2007, Dr. Brown and his fellow *Tuskegee Airmen* were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their service.

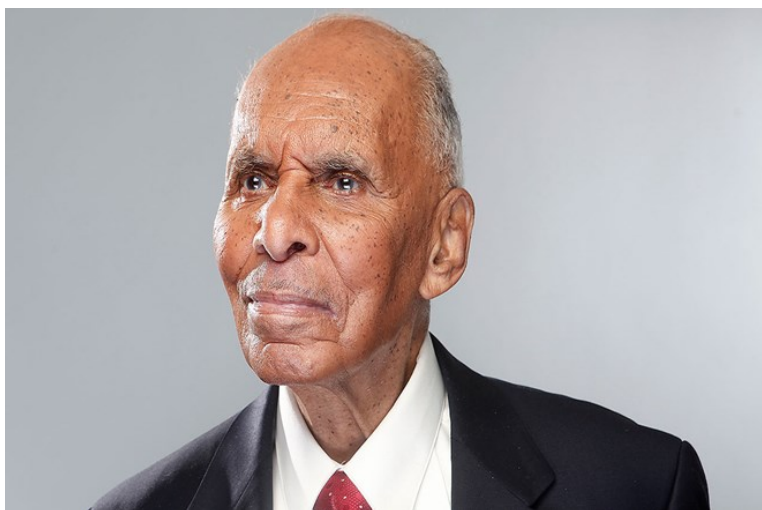
Over the course of his academic career Dr. Brown received numerous awards and honors for scholarly and community activities, chief among them, the NAACP Freedom Award, the Congressional Award for Service to the African-American Community, the New York Urban League's Distinguished Citizen Award and Distinguished Alumnus awards from his alma maters – New York University and Springfield College.

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Dr. Brown will be remembered by many as an extraordinary and courageous civil rights activist, a legendary fighter pilot, and an educator who lead a number of academic institutions with warmth, charm, and a passion for scholarship. On Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, as part of a commemorative funeral service for the *Captain*, the 100<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron performed a "missing man" flyover with their F-16 jet fighters.

Along with his wife, Bernadette, Roscoe Brown is survived by his four children, Doris "Bunnie" Bodine, Diane McDougall, Dennis Brown and Donald Brown, and his six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



# Applying Krueger and Casey's Classic Approach to Focus Group Data Analysis

Felice D. Billups, Ed.D.  
Johnson & Wales University

*"Focus groups are a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment...but focus group analysis is different from (other) analyses in a number of ways." (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2, 141)*

Focus groups are often conducted as exploratory or supplementary qualitative data strategies, and are increasingly included in mixed methods studies. As a data source, focus groups generate rich, descriptive information to support research objectives and provide participant perspectives on a topic. Many beginning qualitative researchers assume that analyzing focus group data is similar to analyzing other types of qualitative data. This assumption, however, dilutes the distinctions and richness of information that results from the focus group discussion.

While many qualitative researchers debate the best strategies for analyzing focus group data, Krueger and Casey (2013) remain among the acknowledged experts in this realm.

This overview will attempt to outline a step-by-step process for applying Krueger and Casey's (2015) Classic Approach, supported by several analytical frameworks/options that maximize interpretation. This discussion assumes a working understanding of focus group research and its applications, using Krueger and Casey (2015), Barbour (2007), Morgan (1997), and Liamputtong (2011) to ground this discussion.

The Classic Approach is one of the most common and manageable processes that can be applied to focus group data (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The nature of focus group analysis is reflected in its systematic and continuous nature; analysis begins with the first completed session and is ongoing with all subsequent sessions. One of the process's main challenges is to balance the voices of the individuals with the collective and emergent perspectives of the group, a process that is fluid and changeable as the discussion evolves. Reflecting on the interactions among the participants allows for the complexities of group dynamics to inform data analysis. Unlike individual interview data or observation/document analysis data, issues of frequency, specificity, emotion, and extent are key elements. Additionally, deviant or outlier case analyses play an important role in understanding these data.

Furthermore, using the Classic Approach provides for an overlay of one of several analytical frameworks, allowing for deeper interpretation of the data. The step-by-step sequence for the Classic Approach is outlined below, followed by an explanation of how to apply the analytical frameworks:

1. After a review of your research purpose and research questions, organize all transcripts, recorder notes, and debriefing/member checking notes from all the focus group sessions, and read through them once without stopping to make notes or codes (if you conducted multiple focus groups, this will take some time).
2. After a period of at least 24 hours (to allow for processing and to avoid 'recall confusion'), review all materials a sec-

ond time and create margin notes about the distinctions between individual comments and group interactions/dynamics.

3. Read all materials a third time and begin to make a preliminary code list, starting with broad categories; continue this process until all 'chunks' of data have been assigned preliminary codes.
4. The next level of analysis seeks to find repeated patterns of meaning at the group interaction level, by reviewing the data and juxtaposing the contrasts between individual perspectives and group interactions (are there key differences between individual views and the actual group perspective? Is one individual forcefully asserting their viewpoint at the expense of the general mood or sentiments of the group, as a whole?).
5. Next, using Krueger and Casey's guidelines (2015, p. 147), analyze your data using the six aspects listed below:
  - Frequency* - i.e., how often was something mentioned and what is the relevance of and weight of all statements?
  - Specificity* - i.e., seek detailed comments and identify comparisons across cases and within cases;
  - Emotion/non-verbal* - i.e., record non-verbal and emotional responses and corroborate them with participant comments (some participants become emotional when they feel they are not being heard while other times emotional commentary serves as a catalyst for group consensus);
  - Extensiveness* - i.e., how many participants said similar things versus how many times a single person reiterated an idea (look across your groups for variations on extent);
  - Outliers* - i.e., review all outlier statements to determine whether they reflected something worth pursuing (this is essential as every discussion will include some comment that seems 'off topic' but may have value);
  - Relationships* - i.e., what were the relationships between statements and content and what did they mean? Were alliances formed among group members and how did this affect the conversation?
6. The next level of coding results from analyzing group interactions and identifying initial theme categories (6-8 categories to begin with, moving to 4-6 after the second or third round); create a brief label or statement to clarify what you mean by each of these thematic categories.

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The final process in the Classic Approach process requires the selection of an analytic framework to complete your data analysis. The choice of a framework is dependent on the nature and purpose of your focus group research objectives, and allows you to examine your data from different perspectives, allowing for alternative explanations. Three of the most commonly applied frameworks are outlined below (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 157-158):

Key Concepts Framework: Identify the factors of central importance, common to most of the participants in the discussion, which aids in understanding how participants view the topic in question. This framework focuses on the centrality of comments rather than on the extremes; the most commonly stated or agreed upon concepts are important in identifying the core elements. This framework is commonly applied when designing or assessing new or existing programs or when seeking to address customer/client needs; outliers or extreme perspectives are minimized in this framework.

Critical Incidents Framework: The objective is to identify critical events that have shaped participant decisions or actions, grounded by the emotional or organizational forces surrounding those incidents. There is less emphasis on patterns in the data (themes) and more emphasis on extracting the details of the incidents to explain what has happened in the organization or group. This approach is often used when exploring program successes or failures, organizational functioning or dysfunction, or identifying triggering causes or catalysts in a group process. As a prelude to conducting a grounded theory study, this framework serves to explain how or why something may have happened and to propose a preliminary working theory.

Testing Alternatives Framework: The primary goal for this framework is to identify the most preferred choice among several alternatives, and to avoid succumbing to the most assertive voice in the group; seeking and identifying group consensus is essential in this framework. The most common application of this framework is intended for pilot testing programs or services, curriculum or academic processes, and to support the selected option with participant reasons and rationale. Participants are provided with a set of options to consider and the group facilitator manages the conversation to elicit opinions and eventual group consensus. The brainstorming or scenario exploration exercise acts as a prelude to organizational planning or goal setting and this framework aids in clarifying important organizational objectives.

At the conclusion of applying the Classic Approach and framework analysis, you should modify and consolidate your resulting themes or concepts. At this point in the process, it is often useful to create labels for each major finding and write a brief statement about what the data suggests, how it answers your research question(s), and how the group synergy adds value to your interpretations. Find direct quotes that express the essence of your findings or ask yourself how the data explain or describe something of significance. When you prepare a final written summary of your focus group findings, you will have drawn on the richness of a multi-dimensional analysis strategy to produce actionable research findings.

## References

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- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Sage.
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## NERA Communications Committee Report

Monica Erbacher  
*James Madison University*

Greetings, NERA members! With the 2016 NERA conference right around the corner in October, we would like to take this chance to remind you that the organization and the conference are possible because of an inspiring amount of member involvement. To those of you who are involved in one or more committees already, thank you for your time and effort!

If you are not currently involved in a committee, please consider joining one. There are positions with a wide range of responsibility levels, from minimal time commitment to more regular duties. Getting involved in a committee is a fantastic way of networking with individuals at other institutions. For graduate students and newer faculty members in particular, committee involvement is a great way to get your name out there!

### ***What positions does the Communications Committee include?***

Currently, the Communications Committee consists of six team members. Some of the most important duties for each team member are outlined below. We are always open to starting new initiatives, like adding other social media outlets, maximizing use of discussion boards, etc. If you are interested in getting involved in current duties or potential new initiatives, please contact us!

Monica Erbacher, University of Arizona, Committee Chair

- Reviews and approves communication requests, synthesizes reports

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

- Manages and distributes e-mail communications, works with Vieth software

Bo Bashkov, American Board of Internal Medicine, Webmaster

- Manages and updates website content

Chastity Williams-Lasley, Duquesne University, Social Media Coordinator

- Manages and updates social media outlet content

Jonathan Steinberg, Educational Testing Service, Advisor/Former Chair

Jeanne Horst, James Madison University, Advisor/Former Chair

In addition to regular member duties and support, we are lucky to have continuing guidance and insight from two excellent former chairs, Jonathan Steinberg and Jeanne Horst.

Our mission is to distribute important information to the NERA community efficiently (i.e., without overloading inboxes), and to facilitate electronic communication between NERA community members. Members of the Communications Committee each take on one communication outlet category, such as the NERA website, social media outlets, or e-mail. 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](mailto:MonicaKerbacher@gmail.com), or find us at this year's NERA conference!

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NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

***Updates and Things to Check Out!***

Note some of the contact information for the committee members has changed. Please be sure to download the updated Communications Request Form from the NERA website (see <http://www.nera-education.org/downloadables.php>, or the Downloadables link under the About tab of the NERA homepage) before submitting a Communications Request. Also, please be sure to use the updated e-mail addresses within the form.

Please join our Facebook and LinkedIn pages and follow us on Twitter if you have not already done so. We would love to get as many people as possible involved in our social media communities! Keep an eye on the NERA bulletin boards and social media outlets for job postings, conference pictures, and other news.

We hope you will consider getting involved in one or more committees this year. NERA has become what it is thanks to enthusiastic volunteers and members like you! Thanks to everyone for an excellent and very productive 2016 so far. We look forward to seeing you in October!



## 2016 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award Announcement

Presenters at the 2016 NERA conference are strongly encouraged to submit an original research paper (no more than 20 pages) in competition for the Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award. It should meet the criteria of being an empirical/inferential or theoretically-based paper with supporting data, and may include case studies. This award is named in honor of Lorne Woollatt, a distinguished New York educator who published, *The evolution of state-local governmental relationship in New York State*, in 1948 and was an active member of NERA. The winner of the award receives a \$500 stipend to present it as an invited session of SRERA at the 2017 American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in San Antonio, TX.

The 2015 winners of this distinguished award were Helen Abdo and co-authors Christian Matthews and Carolyn Ross. The paper entitled, ***Psychological Praise Metrics in K-12 Education***, addresses the amount of teacher praise given to students for reinforcing academics and behaviors at all grade levels.

The award will be given to the best paper presented by one or more authors at the 2016 NERA conference. Each paper goes through a blind review by the award committee to achieve a maximum number of points within specific categories.

The Lorne Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award committee strongly encourages participants at the 2016 NERA conference to enter presented papers meeting the requirements described above. The deadline for submitting a paper to the committee for consideration is November 12, 2016. Details for submitting papers will be sent to all presenters and will be distributed at the conference.

We very much look forward to receiving your paper by November 12, 2016.

For the committee,

Johan W. van der Jagt, Chairperson



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## Update from the Membership Committee

Tabitha McKinley  
*New Jersey Department of Education*

### ***Reclaiming Relationships, and Starting Anew***

This may sound like the beginning of an article about love and marriage, which is the intent of the Membership Committee. As a member of NERA for almost 10 years, when I became newly appointed chair, I analyzed the things that made me so love the association, and tried to brainstorm regarding the things that were less than ideal. In this process, I discovered that one brain is more of a drizzle than a storm, and sought to surround myself with some other great thinkers. As a godsend, Charlie announced that the Ambassadors' program was going to be combined with Membership. The opportunity to work with a dynamic psychometrician such as Dr. Rochelle Michel and her committee was amazing! The Ambassadors' program was such a great selling point from which our new members gained such enjoyment, that it seemed only natural for that committee to be a subsidiary of Membership as a whole. In addition, there are some incredible graduate students who are NERA members, and were willing to lend their expertise regarding ways to engage students as NERA members whose longevity would exceed their matriculation in school. These students are: Francis Rick of UMASS, Tanesia Beverly of UCONN and Nick Curtis of JMU. In addition, Dr. Keith Benson of Camden City Schools in New Jersey is a great addition to the team with his wealth of knowledge regarding how to engage teacher researchers.

One new initiative by membership was a more visible presence at this year's annual AERA meeting. In Washington, DC there was a NERA presence at the booth sponsored by the Consortium of State and Regional Educational Associations. At the booth we distributed the calls for proposals as well as general information about NERA. In addition, the Consortium has added a rollover map that allows researchers in all 50 states to see the closest educational research association according to their state of residence. Many connections have also been made with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the East Coast in efforts to fulfill one of the goals of NERA's membership committee, which is to increase diversity within the association. To that end, Drs. Dawn Williams and Jamie Barden of Howard University have served as a great resource and allies in the efforts to disseminate the calls for proposal and information about NERA throughout the Eastern seaboard.

Under the continual guidance of our immediate past chair Nina Deng, we are continuing our efforts to reclaim old members, and attract new. Please be on the lookout for our coming initiatives as we enter the fall and annual NERA conference!

# BUROS

CENTER FOR TESTING



## The Graduate Lounge

Thai Ong  
*James Madison University*

### **NERA Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award 2015 Winner**

The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) would like to congratulate Anthony Girasoli from University of Connecticut. Anthony's paper titled "Using Digital Stories to Increase High School Students' Writing Self-Efficacy" was selected to receive the 2015 Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award! The GSIC would like to thank the 21 raters who graciously volunteered their time and expertise to select our winner. An abstract of Anthony's paper will be featured on the GSIC page of the NERA website.

We encourage all graduate students to submit their papers for this year's 2016 Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award.

### **Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award 2016**

If you are first author on a paper you presented at NERA (posters included), please consider submitting your paper for the Best Paper Award. The recipient of the award will be given \$250. If you want to be considered for the award, papers must be submitted to [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com) by Friday, November 11th.

### **NERA 2016 Conference**

The GSIC would like to encourage all graduate students to attend the 2016 NERA Conference, which will take place October 26-28 at the Trumbull Marriott Merritt Parkway Hotel in Trumbull, CT.

The conference will feature several exciting events geared toward graduate students:

- Two in-conference sessions:
  - Session #1: Granting-Writing
  - Sessions #2: Best Practices for CVs and Resumes
- Graduate Student Social
- Professional Development Workshops
- Poster Session

### **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 [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com).