APA Convention in San Diego

The American Psychological Association hosted its 118th annual convention this past August in beautiful San Diego, California. The national and international presence was evident in the convention’s massive attendance and wide array of presented research. Several members of our Program were in attendance, including current students Sarah Mire, Ronda Reyna, Sonia Dutt, Tiffany Gerondale, Ruth Hoffman, and Katina Papathopoulos. Professors Drs. Kubiszyn and Dempsey, and past students Drs. Mekel Harris and Rose Ann King also attended. Our Program was also well represented in its research, which included poster and/or paper presentations on progress monitoring measures in algebra, integrative assessment, health risk behaviors in adolescents, social skills of children with neurofibromatosis, and safety information for school psychologists regarding psychotropic drugs in children. As with everything, all good things must come to an end. The four glorious days of San Diego weather, beaches, dining, and entertainment was just not enough! Be sure to mark your calendars for APA 2011: destination Washington, D.C., August 4-7. Proposals for the 119th annual convention are due on December 1, 2010.

Program Dinner at APA

Having some fun on the Pier!
Pictured here: Rose Ann King, Ph.D., Katina Papathopoulos, Ronda Reyna, Sarah Mire, Thomas Kubiszyn, Ph.D., Allison Dempsey, Ph.D., and Mekel Harris, Ph.D.
From Practice to Science
By: Ronda Reyna

Prior to becoming a doctoral student in School Psychology, I worked at the specialist level in public school districts in and around the Houston area. While I found this work very rewarding and enjoyed being a part of a system that addresses school-age students’ academic and mental health needs, I discovered that I wanted to take on an expanded role in the profession by pursuing a degree that would allow me to work in clinical and community-based settings, as well. I was really inspired by working within a very progressive, though small, inner city school district that did a lot of collaboration with mental health clinics and medical facilities. This district has always been ahead of the crowd in terms of implementing evidence-based practices and guidelines in the lives of students. I had often dreamed of pursuing my doctoral degree, but working within this district helped develop within me a strong desire to have this dream realized.

Since becoming a doctoral student, I have already begun to expand my skills, knowledge and competencies to a level that is very exciting and rewarding. Our program, which was APA accredited in 2009, under the development and leadership of Dr. Thomas Kubiszyn, has already begun to demonstrate the ways in which our Ph.D. in School Psychology graduates and students can contribute to clinical psychology practice and research. We get the same opportunities to work within medical, community and clinical-based settings as do other programs, and because of what the city of Houston has to offer, we have many clinical sites available in Houston. The collaborations our department has built within the Texas Medical Center make it easier for us to secure practicum positions, and the skills we are employing have set us apart as a strong group of students who are capable of quickly performing well in these settings.

In a scientist-practitioner program, I have really grown in building up my research skills. The first two years of our program are filled with research and statistics courses that are excellent in providing the skills to understand and employ research methodologies to some very significant theories, concepts, and hypotheses that exist in the field of psychology today. I am very pleased that I made the decision to take part in a doctoral program that will lead to many other vocational opportunities following graduation, and I hope that my experience inspires others to do the same.
Recent Publications & Presentations

Publications

**Presentations**


**Comeaux, N.** (2010, October). *Temper Dysregulation Disorder with Dysphoria: A Call for Research.* Poster presented at the Texas Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention, Dallas, TX.

**Papathopoulos, K., Dutt, S., & Kubiszyn, T.** (2010, October). *School-based monitoring of psychotropic medications.* Poster presentation at the Texas Association of School Psychologists 18th annual convention, Dallas, TX.


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Ashlie Llorens
Presenting Her Poster
Recent Presentations (continued)


Tiffany Gerondale, Sonia Dutt, Fan Wu, and Julie Fehlis at the Town Hall
Future Presentations and Papers

**Frye, K.L., & Reyna, R.S.** (2010, November). *Diversity Enhancement in Psychological Practice.* Poster to be Presented at the Texas Psychological Association Conference, Dallas, TX.


Current Research and Professional Projects

Dr. G. Thomas Schanding is leading a project called “Universal Behavior Screening for Elementary Students,” which is funded by the small grants program at the University of Houston. His assistants include Kerri Nowell, Victoria Faulkner, Moureen Azagidi, and Danielle Knight.

Dr. Schanding is also beginning a project titled “GLBTQ Youth: Effects of gender, sexual orientation, and gender expression on social and school functioning.” This project is funded by the Society for the Study of School Psychology.

Dr. Dempsey and Dr. Keller-Margulis are leading the project “Monitoring Developmental Trends and Outcomes among Children Born Preterm.” This project is also supported by the University of Houston’s small grant program.

Dr. Dempsey is working on three additional foundation projects within the Texas Medical Center (TMC).

Dr. Kubiszyn and his research team: Sonia Dutt, Sarah Mire, Tiffany Gerondale and Katina Papathopoulos, continue to investigate the differential side effects of psychotropic drugs and their relationships to school behavior and performance.

Dr. Keller-Margulis is also involved in some Response-to-Intervention and Curriculum-Based Monitoring projects with Houston area school districts.

Current Practicum Placements

Both Sonia Dutt and Sarah Mire are in clinical practicum rotations within Texas Children’s Hospital/Baylor College of Medicine. Both Sonia and Sarah are involved in providing evidence based interventions in child and adolescent populations.

Ronda Reyna is placed at the University of Texas Harris County Psychiatric Center in the Child Clinical Rotation. Ronda performs psychological evaluations and individual and group psychotherapies within the hospital.

Tiffany Gerondale and Katina Papathopoulos are currently completing their practicums in Houston area school districts. Both students receive the opportunity to work with at-risk populations, performing assessments, intervention and consultation services.

Graciela Reyes is currently at the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County (MHMRA). She is gaining advanced skills working with the intellectually and developmentally delayed population.
Student Milestones

Sarah Mire
Successfully passed her comprehensive exams! Way to go, Sarah.

Three students will be applying for APA internships this year: Sarah Mire, Ruth Hoffman and Gabriela Reyes. Good Luck, Ladies!

Awards and Honors

Dr. Thomas Kubiszyn
Selected by the Texas Psychological Association for the TPA 2010 Outstanding Contribution to Education Award.

Dr. Keller-Margulis
Selected by the Society for the Study of School Psychology to participate in the SPRCC 2011 as an early career scholar in San Francisco.

Katina Papathopoulos
Andrew's Foundation Scholarship recipient for 2010

Graduate Student Research Travel Award in support for two first author presentations at APA in San Diego, CA

Ashlie Llorens
Graduate Student Research Travel Award by EPSY in support of presentation at Association of Black Psychologists convention in Chicago.

Ronda Reyna
Graduate Student Research Travel Award by EPSY in support of first authorship on a poster presented at the American Psychological Association conference in San Diego.

Elected Co-President of the EPSY Graduate Student Association for the year 2010-2011

Kennetha Frye
Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority, Incorporated- Graduate Scholarship Winner

Elected Co-President of the EPSY Graduate Student Association for the year 2010-2011

Black Ribbon Scholarship Winner- Association of Black Psychologists

NASP Student leader for 2010-2011 school year.
Catherine Wisenberg

I began my first semester in the School Psychology program a bit unsure about what my graduate Assistantship would entail. As a student assigned to both Drs. Dempsey and Keller-Margulis, I realized that there were many research projects for me to participate in and there was always plenty of work to be done. One of the research projects I became involved in is the Project PEDS (Promoting Early Developmental Skills). Project assistants, we do even more, allowing our knowledge to generate new questions and shape our inquiries. Graduate school is a complete package, one that is preparing me in an exciting way for a future career in school psychology. My experience, at UH specifically, has been very positive. I have found faculty who are open, welcoming, and helpful, and under whose tutelage my research skills have increased. My classes are all well-taught and relevant, educating through the expertise of the professor and discussion with my peers. And speaking of peers, I have been blessed with the best cohort ever. Everyone is friendly and helpful, and brings unique gifts to the table. I look forward to spending the next four years with them, growing professionally together. We are already visiting different settings in which school psychologists work in our pre-practicum class, and gaining exposure to professionals in the field. Although graduate school involves a lot of hard work, this first year has been excellent so far, and I am still very excited to be at UH.

PEDs began last year, and is a series of research studies examining outcomes of pre-term infants.

These studies are conducted in collaboration with the University of Houston and researchers at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston, Center for Clinical Research and Evidence-Based Medicine and High Risk Infant Clinic. One study currently in progress is examining neurocognitive, academic, and social-emotional functioning, of infants born preterm and with an extremely low birth rate of less than 1000 grams. Roughly 120 infants who met criteria and were treated at the clinic between 2005-2007 were administered a volumetric MRI (VMRI).

A VMRI is similar to an MRI, but is able to detect more subtle differences in the volume of different brain regions. The UT Medical School is one of four sites in the US that have VMRI technology. Based on information from the VMRI, the research team seeks to develop prediction of neurocognitive, academic, and social-emotional outcomes of these infants at 5 years and again at 7 years of age.

My role in the project has been to help gather appropriate measures to evaluate the study participants’ functioning in different areas. In the Spring, I will begin to administer those measures to participants, so I am preparing for that role, as well. Attending research meetings with physicians, researchers, nurses, statisticians, and professors involved in the project has demonstrated that meaningful and sustainable interprofessional collaboration can exist.

I look forward to continuing to increase my knowledge and skills in collaboration within the research process as my assistantship ensues.

What is it like to be a first year student?
-Brent Smith

My first year has been very educational. As an incoming first-year student, I expected graduate school to be much like undergrad, but with some extra research thrown in. As it turns out, I was completely wrong. Graduate school is so much more. We are expected to not only attend classes and know the material, but to take our knowledge a step further, synthesizing and applying what we have learned. As research assistants, we do even more, allowing our knowledge to generate new questions and shape our inquiries. Graduate school is a complete package, one that is preparing me in an exciting way for a future career in school psychology. My experience, at UH specifically, has been very positive. I have found faculty who are open, welcoming, and helpful, and under whose tutelage my research skills have increased. My classes are all well-taught and relevant, educating through the expertise of the professor and discussion with my peers. And speaking of peers, I have been blessed with the best cohort ever. Everyone is friendly and helpful, and brings unique gifts to the table. I look forward to spending the next four years with them, growing professionally together. We are already visiting different settings in which school psychologists work in our pre-practicum class, and gaining exposure to professionals in the field. Although graduate school involves a lot of hard work, this first year has been excellent so far, and I am still very excited to be at UH.
The School Psychology Program at the University of Houston is accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) and approved by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The Program adheres to a scientist-practitioner training model, and is committed to developing professional school psychologists who are competent to engage in applied research and ecologically sensitive evidence-based practice (i.e., students learn to apply critical analysis and inquiry to identify, select, implement, and evaluate evidence-based practices with sensitivity to cultural and linguistic considerations, and in consideration of diverse client preferences). Sensitivity to diversity issues is addressed in specific course work and embedded throughout the training experience. Awareness of diversity issues is ensured because the UH is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse research institutions in the nation.

Calendar of Events

November
School Psychology Awareness Week November 8th through the 11th
Dr. Dempsey will give a presentation on bullying as part of the instructional series on November 7th.
Dr. Schanding will also provide a presentation on practical ways to work with the LGBT community on November 10th.

December
12-1-10-Deadline for proposals for the APA Convention in Washington DC (August 4-7, 2011)
12-1-10 Application deadline for new student acceptance (priority consideration)
12-7-10 Deadline for proposals for the National Conference in Pediatric Psychology in San Antonio (April 14-16, 2011)
12-10-10 Deadline to apply for January 2011 comprehensive examination

Spring 2011
National Association of School Psychology’s Annual Conference in San Francisco, California in February 2011.
Go online for more details and to register early for reduced rates and additional incentives! www.nasponline.org