PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE AGENDA

SCIENCE DIRECTORATE of the AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

DECADE of BEHAVIOR 2000-2010

DECEMBER 2003
VOLUME 17 NUMBER 2

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NHGRI Launches Social and Behavioral Research Branch

by Jonathan Tin, Science Programs Associate

The National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) announced the formation of a new branch -- the Social and Behavioral Research Branch (SBRB) -- within its Division of Intramural Research (DIR). The new branch will develop cutting-edge approaches to translating the discoveries from the recently completed Human Genome Project into interventions for health promotion and disease prevention, and for counseling patients and families dealing with the impact of devastating genetic disorders. The SBRB also will investigate the complex social, ethical and public policy impact of genomic research.

To head the new DIR branch, NHGRI set up a search committee, led by APA member Robert Croyle, Director of NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences. The committee ended up recruiting a prominent behavioral epidemiologist from Duke University, Colleen McBride. As director of the Cancer Prevention, Detection and Control Research Program at Duke, McBride's work focused on developing and evaluating population-based interventions directed at smoking cessation and identifying "teachable moments" for changing behaviors that put people at increased risk for developing disease.

McBride, who received her doctorate in behavioral epidemiology from the University of Minnesota in 1990, also has interests in health behavior change interventions in community and health care settings and in using risk communications to motivate behavioral change. She said she is excited about the challenges and opportunities presented by advances in human genomic discoveries. Starting this new research branch within NHGRI, she said, has involved extensive planning and discussion with experts from around the country.

According to McBride, the SBRB's research portfolio will encompass four conceptual domains:
-- Testing communications strategies aimed at relaying an individual's risk for developing a genetic condition.
-- Developing and evaluating interventions aimed at reducing genetically susceptible individuals' risk of acquiring a disease.
-- Translating genomic discoveries to clinical practice.
-- Understanding the social, ethical and policy implications of genomic research.

In addition to heading the new NHGRI branch, McBride also will spearhead the development of a trans-institute Social & Behavioral Science Center (SBSC) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The SBSC will be designed to hasten the progress of behavioral and so-

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cial science research among participating NIH intramural research programs. A cadre of social and behavioral scientists from various NIH institutes and disciplines - including experimental and clinical psychologists, sociologists, geneticists, public health experts, ethicists, decision scientists, community health professionals, informaticists and health communications specialists -- will be housed together in the new center.

Although many NIH institutes sponsor social and behavioral research through their external, or extramural, grants-making divisions, the SBSC will bring a new focus to this type of research among the intramural research community. The trans-NIH SBRC will house the complete staff of NHGRI's new SBRB as well as investigators and staff from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).

To access information about NHGRI's new SBRB, go to http://www.genome.gov/11508936. ■

Task Force Focuses on Research Regulation Impact

by Sangeeta Panicker, Director, Research Ethics Office

The Task Force on Research Regulation (TFoRR) held its first meeting November 14-15, 2003. The Task Force discussed the current state of affairs in the human research regulation arena and its impact on psychological science. Over the last five years, human research has been subjected to heightened scrutiny by legislators and regulators. A variety of changes have been recommended for stricter oversight and enforcement of regulations pertaining to research with human participants. Although many of these recommended changes stem from lapses in the conduct of biomedical research, they will have a direct impact on behavioral research. Some of the issues include increased accountability for regulations that have always been on the books, but have not been strictly enforced, revamping of the traditional institutional review board (IRB) system, accreditation of human research protection programs, and mandatory education in research ethics for all research personnel.

As a result of this increased scrutiny, some IRBs have become more stringent in their application of relevant regulations. In turn, anecdotal evidence suggests that many psychological researchers are experiencing trouble dealing with their IRB, such as extended delays in getting their research approved, or IRBs requiring changes made to research protocols that the investigators deem unreasonable or unnecessary. There also seems to be some indication that most IRBs are better equipped to review biomedical research than behavioral research protocols. Thus, the Task Force decided on a multi-focus approach to dealing with the issue. A summary of the plan follows:

Long term goal – Intensify advocacy efforts at the legislative and regulatory levels to influence pending legislative proposals and any ensuing regulations. Lobby for more behavioral science representation at the federal agency level and on national advisory panels.

Intermediate goal – Gain a more systematic understanding of the impact that changes in the regulatory landscape have had on research in psychology and the behavioral sciences.

Immediate goals – Produce and disseminate educational resources to two distinct target groups:

* Investigators (Faculty and students) – a comprehensive Web-based, dynamic, step-by-step resource that would enable researchers to navigate the IRB process. Include information that researchers need to know, such as relevant regulations, thorny design issues and possible solutions or alternatives, data-sharing requirements, and confidentiality issues.

* IRBs (Administrators and members) – Conduct workshops and seminars in collaboration with organizations such as Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R) to educate IRBs about issues relevant to effectively reviewing behavioral research such as risk assessment, and consent issues. Also, conduct a needs assessment survey of IRBs to find out topic areas in the review of behavioral research (e.g., deception, sexual behaviors, illegal activities, and third party risks) that they find most challenging and subsequently develop appropriate educational resources for broad dissemination. Finally, assess the extent to which IRBs routinely incorporate sufficient expertise to handle the range of protocols contributed by behavioral scientists.

Members of the Task Force are: Michael Fendrich, University of Illinois at Chicago (Chair); David Barlow, Boston University; Andrew Baum, University of Pittsburgh; Celia Fisher, Fordham University; Daniel Ilgen, Michigan State University; Jacquelyn James, Harvard University; Louis Penner, Wayne State University. ■

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

KURT SALZINGER, Executive Director for Science

It's Still the Behavior

In my first column more than two years ago, I commented, "It's the behavior, stupid!" In the very next column in the Monitor on Psychology, in response to the 9/11 terror attack, I repeated the refrain, "It's the behavior." I proposed that the explanation of that terrible event was not to be found in the exquisite mechanism of the airplanes, or their electronics. The explanation was to be found in the behavior of the terrorists and their managers.

We know behavior needs explanation in its own terms first. If a behavior is inadequate, superfluous or even simply surprising, we know that our first look must be at the events surrounding that behavior. At the same time, as we learn more about the functioning of the brain, we have been increasingly seeking an explanation of aberrant behavior in the circuits of our nervous system rather than in the environment, past and present, in which the behavior occurred. But the explanation that the nervous system provides is on a different level from the behavioral explanation. I don't wish to dredge up the old argument of nature vs. nurture here. I want to remind us all that whether or not the contribution of genetics and/or environment is large or small, it is the behavior that we must specify before we obtain an understanding of it, whether we attribute the major variance to genetics and physiology or the environment.

Like the electronics of the computer, the biology of the organism makes possible the choosing of the keys in our keyboard, but it does not choose the keys. The software allows for formatting of our paragraphs to take place but it does not determine the content of the material that will be formatted or whether any formatting will take place. NIMH currently seems to insist that we always relate our behavior to the functioning of the nervous system but the question remains - - where to find the clarification of our behavior - - in the commerce of our behavior with our environment or in the hardware of the nervous system that allows us to behave. The study of the nervous system underlying the behavior is interesting, even exciting (although equally or even more interesting is the effect of the behavior on the functioning of the nervous system).

Our nervous system is often held up as the limiter of our ability to behave in various ways. And yet though our hardware does not allow us to fly like birds, our behavior has allowed us to invent the airplane and helicopter and to accomplish the feat of flying thereby; although our hardware fails to allow us to calculate many complexities, the computer our behavior invented allows us to transcend the limitations of our brains; although "natural" life span severely limits how long we live, our behavioral inventions extend our time on earth; although our food supply is "naturally" limited, our farm agriculture makes much more available.

It is also true that our behavior makes use of inventions both sophisticated and primitive, both useful and deadly, and it is the behavior that must be praised when it invents prosthetic devices and blamed, as I blamed it when I discussed September 11, when it causes death and destruction. We must blame the behavior of planning and then actually driving the planes into the buildings It is the behavior of driving too fast or thinking too slow that determines our fate when we drive airplanes.

My swan song (for this is my last column) then is to remind you that we must not flee from the study of behavior for none will explicate it better than we can. Psychologists are now clarifying the relation between behavior and the nervous system but we cannot give up our study of behavior on its own terms because only when we specify the behavioral relationships precisely will we be able to shed light on genetic and other physical relationships to what we do and when we do it. To get to behavioral genotypes, we must start with precisely specified phenotypes. My computer makes it possible for me to type this column efficiently but it does not dictate the content; that comes from the variables in the environment that control my behavior. In parting, therefore, allow me to urge us all to do what we do best, study behavior. ■

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SCIENCE BRIEFS

Children and Internet Use: Social, Psychological and Academic Consequences for Low-income Children

by Linda A. Jackson, Alexander von Eye, and Frank Biocca

LINDA A. JACKSON

ALEXANDER VON EYE

FRANK BIOCCA

Linda A. Jackson earned her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Rochester, NY, 1981. She is a professor of Psychology at Michigan State University and Principal Investigator for the HomeNetToo Project (NSF-ITR #085348). Her research interests include cultural and social-psychological factors that influence use and consequences of using information and communication technology (ICT); children's use of ICT and cultural factors that influence its impact on developmental outcomes; culture, cognition and learning in ICT environments and; gendered cultural influences on ICT use and career choice. Her recent research focuses on issues surrounding the digital "use" divide. Professor Jackson has over 100 publications in professional journals, books and book chapters, and conference proceedings.

Alexander von Eye earned his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Trier, Germany, in 1976. He has held positions at the University of Trier, the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, and Pennsylvania State University and is currently at Michigan State University. His research focuses on development and application of statistical methods for analysis of categorical data, longitudinal data, classification, computational statistics, and structural equations modeling. Current work focuses on configural frequency analysis, a method for searching for structure in cross-classifications of categorical data. He also conducts simulation studies on the behavior of statistical methods. Substantively, Professor von Eye is a developmental psychologist with a life-span perspective.

Frank Biocca earned his Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1989. He is currently SBC Chair of Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media at Michigan State University. Previous positions include professor, researcher, or lecturer at the University of California-Berkeley, Stanford University, University of North Carolina, and University of Wisconsin. He directs the networked Media Interface and Network Design (M.I.N.D.) Lab, a multi-university human-computer interaction and communication research lab with seven facilities spanning five countries. Among his book publications is the award winning, *Communication in the Age of Virtual Reality*. Professor Biocca serves on the editorial board of MIT Presence, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, and Media Psychology.

Does using the Internet affect children's development? Do children become socially isolated or connected when they use the Internet? Do they become depressed or elated? Does school performance suffer or improve? A wealth of opinion, anecdotal evidence and media hype has attempted to answer these questions. At one extreme are the Internet enthusiasts who view Internet use as the panacea for all that plagues society, including inadequacies in the educational system. At the other extreme are the Internet alarmists who view Internet use as undermining the very fabric of society, including the healthy development of its children. Most people fall somewhere between these extremes. Most are waiting for research to answer these questions (NSF Report, 2001).

HomeNetToo is a longitudinal field study designed to examine the antecedents and consequences of home Internet use in low-income families. Funded by an Information Technology Research

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grant from the National Science Foundation, the project began in the fall of 2000, when 90 families were recruited to participate in the 18-month study. Families agreed to have their Internet use automatically and continuously recorded, to complete surveys at multiple points during the project, and to participate in home visits during which basic instruction on how to use the Internet was provided. In exchange, each family received a new home computer, Internet access and in-home technical support.

Participants in the HomeNetToo project were 117 adults and 140 children residing in a low-income, medium-sized urban community in the mid-western United States. Adults were primarily African American (67%), female (80%), never married (42%) and earning less than $15,000 per year (49%). Most of the children were African American (83%), male (58%), and living in single-parent households (75%). Average age of child participants was 13 years old. This report focuses on the children in the project - how using the Internet influenced their social, psychological and academic outcomes, and the implications of these findings for future research and public policy regarding the digital divide (Jackson, in press).

How frequently do children use the Internet?

Numerous surveys have attempted to measure how frequently children use the Internet at home. Estimates vary from as high as several hours a day to as low as 3 hours a week, depending on how Internet use is measured (e.g., self-report, automatically recorded), age of children sampled, and the year data were collected (Kraut, Scherlis, Mukhopadhyay, Manning & Kiesler, 1996; Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2002; UCLA Internet Report, 2000, 2001, 2003). Despite high variability in empirical estimates, public perception is that children spend a great deal of time online (Tapscott, 1998).

In the HomeNetToo project we recorded multiple measures of Internet use to permit a more fine-grained analysis of how children are spending their time online. Our findings indicated that HomeNetToo children spent about 30 minutes per day online, logging in only once, and visiting about ten unique domains. However, much to our initial surprise, use of the Internet for communication was rare. HomeNetToo children sent less than 1 e-mail a week. Medians for all communication activities (e.g., instant messaging) were zero. Indeed by the end of the project only 16% of the children were using e-mail, 25% were instant messaging and 16% were participating in chat activities (Jackson, von Eye, Biocca, Barbatsis, Yong, & Fitzgerald, 2003a).

Why did HomeNetToo children make so little use of the Internet's communication tools, a finding we also observed in HomeNetToo adults (Jackson, von Eye, Barbatsis, Biocca, Fitzgerald, & Zhao, in press)? In hindsight, the answer is so obvious as to be easily overlooked. They simply had no one to communicate with! HomeNetToo children were poor. It is likely that their friends and extended family members were poor. Poor people do not typically have home Internet access (e.g., US Department of Commerce, 2000, 2002).

Does Internet use affect children's social outcomes?

Few studies and inconsistent findings render uncertain whether using the Internet has any influence on children's social outcomes. On the one hand, time spent online is time not spent elsewhere, including participating in social activities and communicating with family and friends. On the other hand, the Internet facilitates communication with geographically distant family and friends, and makes it easier to communicate frequently with those nearby. Two independent reviews of this research (Becker, 2000; Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield & Gross, 2000) have concluded that there are few documented social effects, either positive or negative (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay, & Scherlis, 1998; Kraut, Kiesler, Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson, & Crawford, 2002).

In the HomeNetToo project we examined two types of social outcomes that may be influenced by children's Internet use: number of close friends and changes in the amount of time spent with family, friends and activities (e.g., extra-curricular school activities, sleeping). On average, children reported having seven close friends. This number remained the same over time and was uninfluenced by Internet use. How children allocated their time did change over time but these changes were unrelated to Internet use.

Findings discussed earlier may explain why Internet use had no social impact. HomeNetToo children, like the adults in the project, made little use of the Internet's communication tools (e.g., e-mail). The Internet's social impact may depend on using these tools to build new relationships and/or strengthen existing ones. Social impact may also depend on personal and situational factors, some of which have been examined in previous research with adults (e.g., personality traits; Jackson, von Eye, Biocca, Barbatsis, Fitzgerald, & Zhao, 2003b; Kraut et al., 2002) and others of which have yet to be identified. Alternatively, it may be that Internet use has no social impact. Like media that have preceded it (e.g., books), the Internet may be seamlessly integrated into people's ongoing lives.

Does Internet use affect children's psychological outcomes?

As was the case for social outcomes, few studies have examined the relationship between children's Internet use and psychological outcomes. In fact we could locate only two studies that directly addressed this relationship. One found adverse psychological effects of Internet use for teens (i.e., greater loneliness and depression with greater Internet use; Kraut et al., 1998) but a follow-up study suggested that these effects disappeared with Internet experience (Kraut et al., 2002). The only available review of this research concluded that there is no evidence that computer use is directly related to any psychological outcomes

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(Shields & Behrman, 2000).

In the HomeNetToo project we focused on two types of psychological outcomes: general affect and feelings of self-worth. More time online was associated with less negative affect, but only during the first three months when home Internet access was still a novelty. More logins were associated with more negative affect throughout the trial, possibly because they indicate interruptions in Internet activities. Feelings of self-worth began high and remained high. Using the Internet had no effect on these feelings.

Does Internet use affect children's academic outcomes?

A considerable body of research has examined the effects of computer use on academic outcomes. However, reviews of this literature typically conclude that the results are inconclusive (e.g., NSF Report, 2001; Roschelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordon, & Means, 2000; Subrahmanyam et al., 2000). Although benefits of computer use have been observed, they typically depend on a variety of factors (e.g., subject matter). The only cognitive outcome for which benefits have been consistently observed is visual-spatial skills. Computer gaming contributes to visual-spatial skills, at least when these skills are assessed immediately following the computer activity (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, Kraut, & Gross, 2001).

In the HomeNetToo project we obtained children's grade point averages (GPAs) and scores on standardized tests of reading and math. We then examined whether Internet use during the preceding time period predicted these academic outcomes. It did. Children who used the Internet more showed greater gains in GPA and reading test scores -- but not math test scores -- than did children who used it less (Jackson, von Eye, Biocca, Barbatsis, Zhao, & Fitzgerald, 2003a). Latent linear growth curve analysis supported the conclusion that Internet use leads to improvements in academic performance.

There are important caveats in interpreting these findings. First, HomeNetToo children were performing below average at the start of the project. Mean GPA was about 2.0, and mean percentile ranks on standardized tests of reading and math were about 30%. Whether similar benefits of Internet use will obtain for children performing at or above average is a question for future research. Second, the gains we observed, though statistically significant, were modest in magnitude. Mean GPAs and standardized test scores were still below average at the end of the project. However, even modest gains are encouraging, particularly in light of the fact that HomeNetToo children were not required to use the Internet in order for their families to participate in the project.

Why might using the Internet lead to improvements in GPAs and reading test scores? One explanation lies in how HomeNetToo children used the Internet. Recall that Internet use was primarily Web use, not e-mail use or use of other communication tools. The Web is primarily text. Thus, more time on the Web means more time spent reading, which may explain the increase in GPAs, which depend heavily on reading skills, and in standardized tests scores in reading.

Summary

Overall, findings from the HomeNetToo project indicate that home Internet use has no adverse effects on children's social or psychological outcomes, and has positive effects on their academic outcomes. More research is needed to examine the generalizibility of these findings, to identify mediating mechanisms by which Internet use influences academic outcomes, and to develop and evaluate interventions designed to maximize the benefits of Internet use for children. The public policy implications of our findings are clear. Children who may stand to benefit most from home Internet access are the very children least likely to have it. The vision of the Internet as the technology that levels the playing field in education will remain just that - a vision, unless visionary leaders launch a concerted effort to make the Internet available to all (Jackson, Barbatsis, von Eye, Biocca, Fitzgerald, & Zhao, 2003c). ■

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A Hitchiker's Guide to the NIH Roadmap: What's In It For You?

by Patricia Kobor, Public Policy Office

An initiative of NIH Director Elias Zerhouni, the Roadmap is a collection of 28 new research initiatives organized in three themes (Research Teams of the Future; New Pathways to Discovery; and Re-engineering the Clinical Research Enterprise) that are intended to stimulate investment in crosscutting research areas that no one institute could fund on its own. Each institute and center at NIH has given 1 percent of its budget to a central pool to provide funds for these initiatives—a total of approximately $35 million for Fiscal Year 2005. The National Science Foundation has long had a transfoundation pool of research funds, but this is the first time a formal program has been established at NIH.

Research psychologists can be confident that a number of the Roadmap initiatives are focused on or welcoming of behavioral research proposals. In many cases the Requests for Applications (RFAs) arising from Roadmap initiatives will be reviewed by Special Emphasis Panels rather than by standing NIH study sections.

The NIH web page contains a great deal of information about Roadmap initiatives. A description of the initiative areas can be found at http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/initiatives.asp. One or more RFAs will be issued for each initiative. New initiatives are appearing daily so you should check the website often.

Behavioral Roadmap Initiatives: Under the theme "Re-engineering the Clinical Research Enterprise," psychology is explicitly listed as one of the disciplines eligible for career support through the RFA for institutional support entitled, "Multidisciplinary Clinical Research Career Development Programs." According to the NIH Guide, "Career Development Programs supported under this RFA must include a broad representation of clinical disciplines and professions (e.g., internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, dentistry, pharmacy, statistics, nursing, psychology) and their various specialties and sub-specialties. Programs must include a structured core didactic component and a practical training component in various aspects of the design, conduct, and analysis of clinical research. Individuals should be trained in team research settings and will be known as NIH Clinical Research Scholars (CR Scholars)." The full RFA can be found at http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/clinicalresearch/grants.asp.

Several initiatives are being coordinated by the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research in partnership with one or more NIH institutes. One example is a multidisciplinary research training initiative on Behavior, Environment and Biology that was posted on November 19, 2003. The RFA can be found at http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MH-04-007.html. This institutional, postdoctoral National Research Training Award (NRSA) will support the establishment of programs that provide formal coursework and research training in a new interdisciplinary field to individuals holding advanced degrees in a different discipline. These training programs are required to include a behavioral or social science discipline, and programs are encouraged to integrate the behavioral and/or social sciences with the more traditional biomedical sciences. In particular, applicants are encouraged to develop programs that accept postdoctoral trainees with varied research backgrounds, and provide multiple tracks of research training that enhance each trainee's development of new, interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, while supporting opportunities for trainee interaction and research integration across the research tracks.

Another new Roadmap initiative is called "Dynamic Assessment of Patient-Reported Chronic Disease Outcomes." According to the NIH Guide, "This RFA seeks proposals for innovative approaches to measuring patient-reported outcomes (PROs) that will meet the needs of clinical researchers across a wide variety of chronic disorders and diseases. This RFA solicits two types of applications; (1) individual research proposals, with added concept proposals for network-wide collection of self-report data on specific domains of patient-reported outcomes, symptoms, or quality of life in large and diverse samples, and (2) proposals for a statistical coordinating center that will serve as a data repository, conduct analyses, and develop a computerized system to administer, collect, and report PRO data. The principal investigators of each project will become members of a network - Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS)- to be estab-

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lished immediately following award." The grants will be administered by the National Institute for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases on behalf of the NIH. Letters of intent are due on February 22, 2004. The RFA may be found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-04-011.html.

Drawing the Roadmap: When planning began in earnest for the NIH Roadmap in early 2003, behavioral and social scientists were initially concerned that the initiatives might largely exclude behavioral research. Psychologists and others at NIH worked hard to ensure that behavioral and social scientists were appointed to the trans-NIH working groups developing each of the initiatives, so that psychology and the other social science disciplines could have a voice in, and influence on, the process. APA's Chief Executive Officer Norman Anderson contacted several NIH institute directors personally to discuss the composition of the working groups and the conceptual framework for the Roadmap. As a result of all these efforts, the behavioral and social sciences stand to benefit along with the rest of NIH by an increased investment in trans-NIH research and renewed scientific infrastructure.

Virginia Cain, Acting Director of the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, has offered to be a point of contact for behavioral scientists with questions or concerns about the Roadmap proposals or processes. She can be reached at (301)402-1146 or Virginia_Cain@nih.gov. ■

What's New in Testing and Assessment?

by Marianne Ernesto, Director, Testing and Assessment

Several issues relating to testing and assessment have been brought to national attention this past year as the reauthorizations of the American with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Head Start have progressed. To address testing and assessment provisions proposed as part of the reauthorization of the IDEA, members of APA's Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment formed a sub-committee specifically charged to considered issues related to the retention of the I.Q./achievement discrepancy criterion for identification of learning disabilities. The sub-committee's recommendations, which were reviewed and approved by the APA Board of Directors, were included as part of the IDEA related briefing material APA provide to various members of Congress.

Science Directorate staff has been carefully monitoring Head Start related activities in the House of Representatives over the past several months. Currently, the Senate's version of the bill reauthorizing Head Start is being reviewed, particularly provisions related to testing and assessment. Comments concerning the appropriate use of assessments for young children will be sent to Senate staff for review prior to the floor debate early next year.

Education and Advocacy

With the emergence of the educational accountability movement, the issue of fair and appropriate testing has become an issue central focus. For many years, the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP), an ad hoc APA committee, has advocated for the fair use of testing practices. The group's member organizations, all of which have a connection to assessment in some way, represent school psychologists, counselors, psychometricians, testing directors, educators, and speech/language/hearing professionals. JCTP's core mission involves providing testing professionals with the information they need in order to carry out and promote good testing practices. With that goal in mind, and in order to be consistent with the newly revised Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999), JCTP began the process of revising the Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education (Code) in 1999. The Code was initially developed by JCTP in 1988 as a statement of the primary obligations that professionals who develop or use educational tests have toward test takers. The APA Board of Directors recently approved the revised Code at its December 2003 meeting. The Code will now be sent to the APA Council of Representative for endorsement in February.

The ramifications of psychological testing on the Internet remain a central focus of the office of testing and assessment. The report of the Task Force on Psychological Testing on the Internet, Psychological Testing on the Internet: New Problems, Old Issues, was submitted (in condensed form) and accepted for publication in the American Psychologist (AP). Look for the report in spring 2004 issues of AP. The entire report (75 pages) will be available for downloading from the Science Directorate website shortly after publication. The report is a comprehensive overview of testing on the Internet and does not contain specific recommendations concerning APA policy. In the near future, CPTA will begin consideration of the report's findings and the possible policy implications for APA. The new year, will find members of CPTA considering several issues, they include: the release of test data in light of new Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) regulations and the new APA Ethics Code, observers in the testing situation, the utilization of cognitive examinations for assessment of learning disabilities as part of IDEA, and the evolution of the assessment provisions included in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. You can keep up to date on all of CPTA's activities by visiting their new webpage scheduled for availability in spring 2004. ■

ISSN:1040-404X

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Psychological Science Agenda is published monthly by APA's Science Directorate. Dedicated to promoting and serving scientific psychology, *Psychological Science Agenda* provides news about national scientific policy developments, examines policy issues affecting and affected by the behavioral research community, and highlights the advocacy efforts of the Science Directorate on behalf of research and academic psychologists. *Psychological Science Agenda* also features news of APA's governance and program initiatives relating to scientific and academic psychology, and provides valuable, timely information about funding opportunities for research psychologists.

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