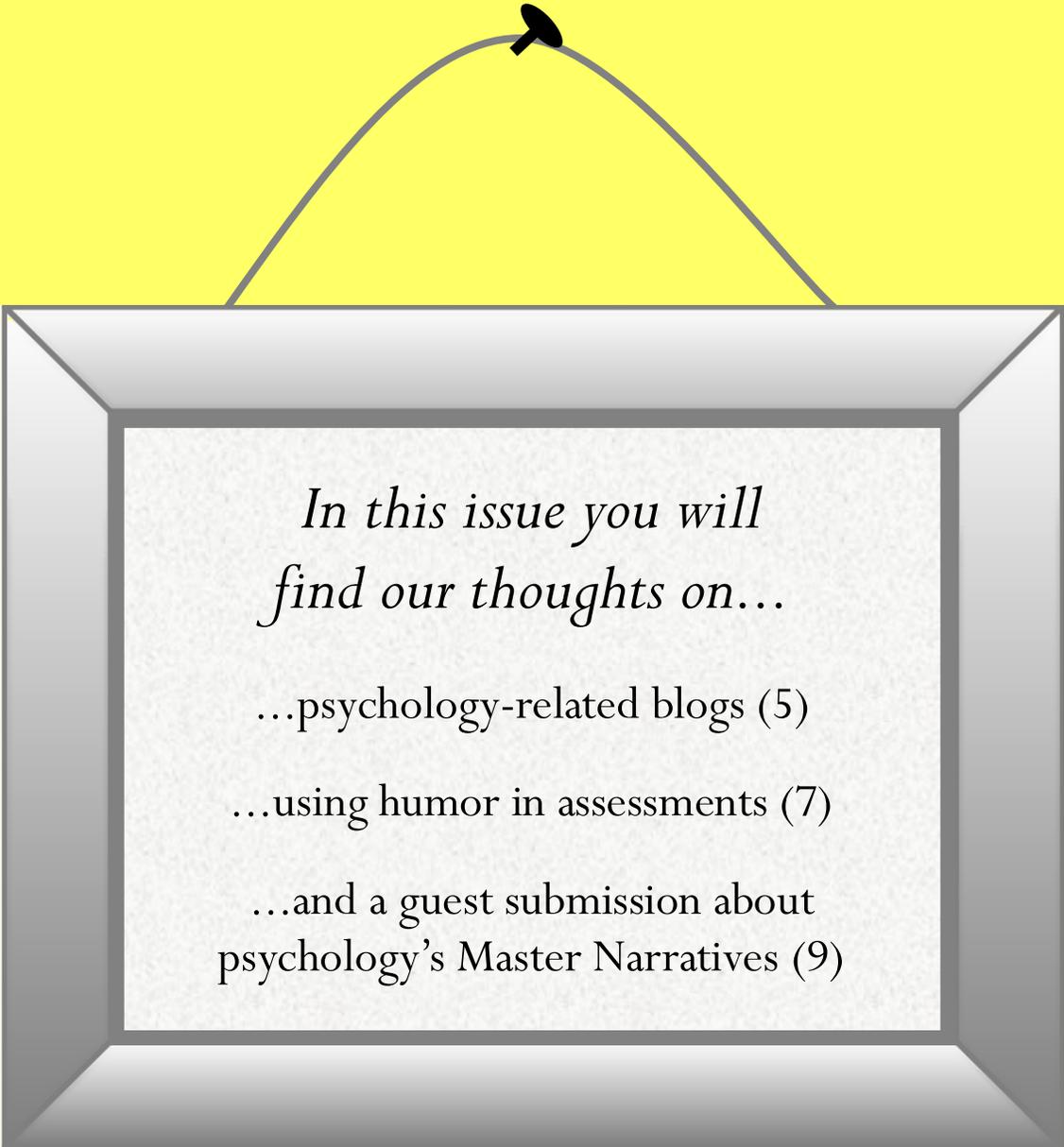


# THE FORUM

SPRING 2013 EDITION



*In this issue you will  
find our thoughts on...*

...psychology-related blogs (5)

...using humor in assessments (7)

...and a guest submission about  
psychology's Master Narratives (9)

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We need your feedback on how we did and what you would like to see in future so we can optimize things for students in personality and social psychology. To that end, please take ~10 minutes to fill in this feedback survey.

[https://uwopsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_3n0PT4b8Gc5qFAV](https://uwopsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3n0PT4b8Gc5qFAV)

### **Communication Changes**

As you may have noticed, there have been some recent changes in the overall SPSP communication. We'll no longer receive listserv posts clogging up our inboxes, which may be quite nice for some. However, this doesn't mean that you will have to spend all of your time seeking out information. Everything is now organized discussion-board style (called forums...not to be confused with The Forum) and you can receive updates when people post or every week or so. Check out the SPSP website [help](#) section for more information.

A further note: The GSC has recently updated their contact email to [gsc.spsp@gmail.com](mailto:gsc.spsp@gmail.com). We will still receive messages sent to the yahoo address, but please use the gmail address as your new point of contact.

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Welcome to Spring! That is, the Spring Issue of the Forum, coincidentally the last issue published by the 2012-2013 Graduate Student Committee. It's been a great year—SPSP 2013 was an outstanding success for students thanks to your enthusiastic involvement in the many GSC events and activities.

SPSP student events in New Orleans ranged from moderately successful to overwhelmingly successful. In particular, we ended up with 479 people at the Student Social Event at *Republic*—more than double last year's attendance. We heard that people enjoyed the glow-in-the-dark ice cubes, not to mention the free beer, food, and masks. We are working on continuing our partnership with Medialab and SONA to ensure more great parties in future. The Training Preconference was also very successful—it sold out beforehand—as were the Mentoring Lunches and both awards. Note that we are still seeking your feedback on all our events: please take a few minutes to complete the GSC Survey.

The Spring Forum is brimming with handy material: on page 4 you will find tips on navigating the collaboration process, on page 5 there is advice on publishing an academic blog, and on page 6, we outline what you need to know as an undergraduate seeking summer internship positions. Page 7 offers suggestions for incorporating humor into your teaching, as well as deadlines for upcoming conferences. Page 8 consists of interviews with psychologists, where they share an anecdote of something they learned “the hard way.” Pages 9 and 10 contain a special guest piece by William L. Dunlop on Master Narratives in the field of Personality Psychology. We invite you to share your perspective on this piece at the SPSP Student Discussion Board—simply click the link on page 10 and jot down a few thoughts. We are curious to see what you have to say! Finally, on page 11 we serve up some valuable life advice in the column: Dear (Experimental) Psychologist. Check it out!

Although it has been a great year, we are pleased to pass the torch to your new President, Erica Schneid, and the 2013-2014 GSC. Rest assured you are in good hands. The new GSC is already hard at work cooking up symposia, posters, preconferences, and all the other content you have come to expect from your GSC. All your favorite events will be back next year—the Mentoring Luncheons, the Student Poster Awards, the Student Social Event—and better than ever. Start planning now so have an abstract ready to submit for the deadline in July!

Thanks for a great year and I look forward to serving another as your 2013-2014 past-president!

- *Paul Conway*

# NAVIGATING THE COLLABORATION PROCESS



BY ERICA SCHNEID  
& KATHRYN BOLLICH

innumerable career and research benefits as well, including gaining another's perspective on the research topic. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you navigate your research relationships:

Much of the research in our field involves collaborating with peers and colleagues. Not only are collaborations fun and allow you to meet people you might not otherwise, there are

**Navigate authorship and roles early on.** This needs to be done at the outset or it can get really awkward for everyone. Deciding authorship early on makes it clear what everyone's expectations and duties should be, making it easier for everyone to know the amount of time and effort they should be contributing. Who's in charge of cleaning the data? Analyzing the data? Writing the methods & results, intro? While it may make you feel uncomfortable, it really is best to be very explicit up front.

**Discuss long-term research boundaries.** Following the authorship discussion, collaborators should also work to set clear expectations and boundaries. Is your collaboration on *this* paper alone or on the full line of research? Also, would all of the members of your collaboration team be expected to include each other on other articles in the area, or would it be ok for them publish future articles in this area independently? Some collaborations may be the beginning of a new area of research, so it is important to make expectations clear up front to avoid conflict and discomfort later on.

**Set and follow deadlines.** It is important to show respect to collaborators by either getting things to them on time or at least communicating clearly when you are behind. The collaborations you develop help create your reputation in the field. By following deadlines, you'll make it clear you're conscientious and hardworking!

**Be honest.** If you disagree on a major point, it's important to discuss it--letting things pass for the sake of maintaining a harmonious relationship will likely just lead to problems later on. Work to maintain a relationship that allows for the honest sharing of ideas and expression of disagreement.

**Make it IRB official.** Your IRB may have specific guidelines for collaborating on projects at more than one research site and for sharing data. Make sure you follow those guidelines carefully, and take care of the necessary paperwork early on to avoid data collection or analysis delays!

**Don't over commit.** Collaborations can be a lot of fun. However, graduate school is busy already with classes, teaching requirements, and research with your own advisor. Don't spread yourself too thin and have the quality of your work suffer as a result! Be aware of how much time you can commit to a project and make sure you let your collaborators know if your contribution may be minimal. Claiming a first author role but doing third-author work is not the way to maintain long-term working relationships.

Try to keep all of these things in mind as you begin or join collaborative projects. They will help avoid future disagreements and uneasiness within work groups and this should lead to enhanced productivity and success.

# ENGAGING THE BLOGOSPHERE

Blogs are a popular way to share research more casually with fellow researchers or laypersons than most professional outlets accept, and allow researchers to easily converse with their audience (via comments). If you're new to blogging (either as a reader or writer), I've compiled a few resources for finding blogs you'll enjoy, and a few tips for creating one of your own.

For a collection of personality blogs compiled by the Association for Research in Personality (ARP), including great ones such as Sanjay Srivastava's *The Hardest Science* and SPSP president David Funder's *funderstorms*, head over to the [ARP's Personality Meta-Blog](#). If you want to stay up on current events in the field (both social and personality), this is a great site to check out. (You can even request to have your personality blog added.)

*Scientific American* recently created its own meta-blog as well: [MIND Blog Network](#). The MIND Blog Network features a diverse set of musings from psychology and neuroscience bloggers, so if you're interested in a broader look at the field, take a look here. (They also include guest posts, if you're interested in contributing!)

Some other blogs worth checking out (some of which are included in the meta-blogs above) include [Psych Your Mind](#) and [PsySociety](#), both great examples of bringing pop culture and everyday experiences together with psychological findings (they're also both primarily written by grad students). For methods and stats enthusiasts, try out [Statistical Modeling](#), [Causal Inference](#), and [Social Science](#) or [Experimental Turk](#) (for the latest on mTurk). Or, if you want to keep up with all the latest manuscript retractions across various fields of science, head on over to [Retraction Watch](#). For other blogs still, many of the blog authors listed above have their own "blogroll" on their main page-- their collection of blogs they tend to read or like.

## Teaching a class next semester?

Consider having your students write blog posts rather than their regular reaction papers or other assignments. It's a great chance for students to translate psychological concepts to their everyday experiences (and will quickly make it clear to you if they actually understood the concept!), and to practice creating online discussions about psychology.

## Want to start your own blog?

- ◆ Consider who you want your audience to be. Do you want to target your colleagues or the average layperson?
- ◆ Try writing a few posts privately before making it public. This gives you some time to fiddle with content focus, site structure, and writing style before people have time to critique.
- ◆ Consider creating a group blog rather than a solo blog. The collaborative effort could be motivating and help you keep up with more regular posts. This is also a great way to screen your ideas before making them public.
- ◆ Need inspiration? Read other blogs! Inside *and* outside of psychology. You'll quickly pick up the various styles you can use to get your ideas out there.

*Do you have a favorite blog you'd like others to know about? Leave it in The Forum's discussion board [here](#).*

**Further reading:** The Association for Research in Personality recently had the opportunity to interview a few popular personality bloggers. Check it out [here](#) to get an inside look on how and why they blog.



BY KATHRYN BOLLICH

# UNDERGRADUATE CORNER

Are you an undergraduate looking to gain some hands-on research experience and travel at the same time? Then a summer internship might be the perfect position for you.

BY ASHLEY WHILLANS



Internships usually involve at least 8-10 hours and as much as 30 hours of research work per week working on tasks like data entry, running studies, helping graduate students with their projects, and attending lab meetings. Importantly, internships can be a great way to get in-depth research experience and get to know the professor and/or graduate students of a lab you might want to work for. Internships are also perfect for junior or senior students looking for another reference letter before applying to graduate school.

But just how do you find out about these internships? Here are some tips for locating the summer research internship of your dreams.

First, join the SPSP List-serve. Often researchers post opportunities on this mailing list. While not every email you will receive from this list will be relevant to you, there are worthwhile internships and opportunities posted on this listserv from researchers around the world.

Second, use the power of Google. Put your newly developing research skills to the test to find out what universities have undergraduate internship opportunities. For example, the Center for Decision Making Research at Carnegie Mellon or PsiChi (an international honors society in Psychology) are good places to start looking. Your college or university might even have information about summer research internship positions through their career services center.

Finally, if you can't find an advertised unpaid internship, create your own! It never hurts to contact a professor at another institution and ask if they are looking for research assistants for the summer. Most labs are always looking for keen research assistants to help with summer projects.

Good luck and have the best summer research adventure ever!

## TIPS FOR EMAILING PROFESSORS

Here are some tips for emailing a professor about possible RA or internship positions:

- ◆ *Keep your email short.* Professors receive a lot of email, and if you want to maximize the chance they will read yours, make sure to keep your inquiry concise.
- ◆ *State your specific interests and availability.* For example, be clear about your time commitment and availability right away. In other words, you probably don't want to apply for a summer position if you are going to be vacationing for eight weeks in July and August.
- ◆ *Send your most updated CV.* Because you want to look as impressive as possible, make sure to update your CV before emailing the professor you want to work for. This includes updating your references.
- ◆ *Proof-read.* Email typos can look very unprofessional. Also have a friend look at your email before you send it.
- ◆ *Finally, convey your enthusiasm!* You are applying because you are really interested in that professor's lab or program of research. Make sure they know how keen you are!

# PRODUCING A POSITIVE PSYCHE

## Incorporating Humor into Your Assessments

College teaching is a part of life for most graduate students, whether the experience is acquired in graduate school or pre-tenure. Teaching may appear daunting at first, carrying that burden of educating anywhere between a couple dozen to several hundred college kids about your area of expertise. But, after a few semesters and some more practice at that time management thing, the threat that you may perceive in teaching should decrease significantly. To help with that, consider incorporating humor in your assessments!

Many students claim to be bad testers, and if you've proctored an exam (or remember taking them), you probably know that students could use some tension reduction to help them focus on the task at hand instead of letting their anxiety lead them to mistakes. The presence of humor on tests, or other assignments for that matter, may help reduce tension and increase performance.

### Humor can be worked into assessments in at least three ways:

- It can be used as the topic of problem, such as these examples that could be used in statistics:  
“Dr. Farquad hypothesizes that consuming the elusive purple farkleberry can be an effective treatment for psychosis caused by Dreaded Yellow Dander Disease...”  
- OR -  
“Zombies have attacked Lafayette. You are unsure what you should do, but you realize you happen to live next door to an expert group of Zombie hunters. In this instance you are highly likely to...”
- It can also be used in the multiple-choice questions:  
“Greg attributes his bad behavior to a combination of sun exposure and carrot consumption...” as a foil on attributions,  
- OR -  
“Lloyd Blankfein gives excess money to charity because he doesn't know what else to do with it.” and “Stuart changes diapers more often in hopes that his wife will offer to take the longer job of bottle-feeding baby Jasper more often.” as foils to a question about examples of altruistic behavior.
- You can also use a theme for all of the names in your exams: characters from Harry Potter, Hunger Games, or Twilight, and people from How I Met Your Mother or Big Bang theory work really well for interpersonal relationship characters. Students have often commented that they look forward to seeing what theme will be used in each exam - a little lightheartedness seems to set them a bit more at ease.



BY STUART DAMAN  
& ERICA SCHNEID

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND ABSTRACT DEADLINES

### Conferences

*Southwestern Psychological Association*  
April 5-7, Fort Worth, TX

*Western Psychological Association*  
April 25-28, Reno, NV

*Midwestern Psychological Association*  
May 2-4, Chicago, IL

*Association for Psychological Science*  
May 23-26, Washington, DC

*Association for Research in Personality*  
June 20-22, Charlotte, NC

*American Psychological Association*  
July 31-August 4, Honolulu, HI

### Abstract Deadlines

*SPSP*  
July 2013

# INTERVIEWS WITH PSYCHOLOGISTS

Each issue, we will be asking professors a question that we think might provide useful information to current students. This issue, we asked professors:

*"Graduate students are always looking to learn tricks of the trade.*

*What is something that you have had to learn the 'hard way' in your career? "*



Sitting on nice results is bad; it erodes the quality of a finding, because often (but not always), as more time goes by, the results are likely to become less meaningful and novel. So it's like getting a lower return over time on all the work that was invested in producing a set of results.

I still struggle with this (as do most people, I think), because often there are other papers and commitments that keep getting in the way of publishing new results!

*- Ximena Arriaga, PhD, Purdue University*

One of the biggest lessons I learned was that when switching institutions, it is important to re-pretest all of your study materials. Knowing that a manipulation produces its intended effect at one institution does not guarantee that it will be as impactful at another institution. For example, in one population, participants' attitudes towards a given topic might be relatively malleable, whereas in another population, the same topic might be one on which students have strong opinions.

*- Kenneth DeMarree, PhD, Texas Tech University*



I think we often forget that great study ideas don't have to come from the literature or colleagues. You never know what study ideas you'll get from conversations outside of work. But be careful. When I was first getting interested in neuroscience, I met a neurologist on an airplane and excitedly asked him to tell me about a typical day at his job. He seemed puzzled and, thinking that he couldn't hear me well because of the noisy plane, I repeated my question. It took me about thirty seconds into his answer to realize that he was a urologist.

*- Jennifer Beer, PhD, University of Texas at Austin*

If you consider nominating someone as a potential reviewer, you may as well deem the person's work sufficiently relevant to cite it :). Back in early graduate school, I was working on my very first grant proposal. After months of sweat and tears, I finally had a full draft and the last thing I needed to do before sending it off was to nominate a potential reviewer. Obviously, I knew who was familiar with the study area; so, I put a name down on the reviewer nomination form. Unfortunately—but, I guess, not exceptional for a first-year student--, my citation strategy was highly focused and very narrow, that is I exclusively cited studies that were immediately, directly, and completely relevant to what I was proposing. So, although I knew the researcher would be ideal to review this proposal (and would likely like it), I failed to cite him in it, largely because he had "moved on" research wise and not conducted studies using this paradigm in a while. The proposal went out, got reviewed, and even funded (ultimately, a testament of a high heart-to-ego-ratio, I would say). Months later at a conference, I ran into the person I had nominated and, immediately, he told me how much he liked the study. Then, though, he couldn't avoid asking me with a smile, how come I thought none of his work was relevant--as I didn't cite it--if I considered him an expert on the topic. No need to describe my physiological response in this moment; and no need to point out that I learned my lesson—the hard way.

*- Matthias Mehl, PhD, University of Arizona*



# MASTER NARRATIVES OF PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGISTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

GUEST SUBMISSION BY

WILLIAM L. DUNLOP  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLOMBIA

From news broadcasts to personal anecdotes, stories reside in every facet of our lives. As social scientists in training, should we care about this? Do these stories matter? I, along with a conglomerate of others (e.g., McAdams, 1997), would say they do. Once more, this “mattering” may manifest in a manner that, upon initial reflection, is not readily apparent.

Stories hold the potential to influence the way we see the world as well as our behavior within it. As a case-in-point example of this fact, Sarbin (2004) proffered the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, a fictional piece in which Werther, the protagonist, chooses to commit suicide as a result of his inability to attain Charlotte, the woman he loves. This story of unrequited love leading to suicide preceded an increase in young adult males throughout Europe taking their own lives. Interpreting this correspondence, Sarbin suggested that these men had “adopted as a *guiding fiction* Werther’s struggle with rejection and his ultimate suicide” (p. 7, emphasis mine).

What exactly are guiding fictions or *master narratives*? At their core, they represent the cultural scripts that hold relevance to members of certain groups (e.g., teenagers, males; Cohler & Hammack, 2007). Although it may be compelling to think otherwise, the dominance of these master narratives is not static, instead it ebbs and flows in tandem with the characteristics of the broader social contexts in which these and other narratives reside. Once more, given the omnipresence of stories, master narratives exist in most if not all meaningful domains, even the one of utmost relevance to those reading this piece; personality science.

Since the inception of the field, personality psychologists have adopted master narratives of various stripes. Just as was the case with many of the young adults who read *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, moreover, these narratives have likely come to influence the thoughts and behaviors of many within the field. Here, efforts, though admittedly brief, are focused on elaborating what may be correctly understood to represent the two most recent master narratives relevant to personality psychologists. Following this, attention is turned to discussion of the manner in which the narrative of these psychologists’ may change in future, and what apprentices such as ourselves can best do in light of this potential change.

## The Narrative of Persecution

The 1970s and 1980s were a time of crisis for personality psychologists (McAdams, 1997). This crisis was predicated on at least two factors. First, there existed a growing dissatisfaction regarding the nature of the research being conducted. As Carlson (1984) noted, the field had moved away from the grand theories of yesteryear, wherein principal interest lay in the consideration of the *whole* person (i.e., holism), and towards a focus on singular variables, assessed in college students, at a sole point in time. Second, personality psychology was under assault from within and from without by critics claiming that behavioral dispositions lacked the degree of cross-situational consistency necessary to be considered important; the implication being that situations, rather than persons, were worthy of consideration.

The dominant response of those during this period bold enough to self-identify as personality psychologists was to fight tooth and nail for the ontological status of behavioral dispositions (McAdams, 1997). Thus, the person-situation debate was born and, therein, lies the timber of the first master narrative considered: the narrative of persecution. This narrative was characterized by a (dispositional) stance of defensiveness and a fear that, at any moment, the other shoe may drop and the field would be dissolved on the basis that personality, plainly put, had no place in psychology.

## The Narrative of Emancipation

Thankfully, the other shoe did not drop. On the contrary, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a series of events worked to affirm the personality psychologists’ place within our discipline. To begin, earlier crises led to the subdivision of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* into three sections, representing the different traditions in the field, with one dedicated to the scientific investigation of personality processes. In addition, the person-situation debate, though in many ways tragic, helped personality researchers to become clearer about the nature of the construct now most central to their enterprise. Perhaps most important, however, this period marked the discovery of a framework for conceptualizing behavioral dispositions – the five factor model (see John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008).

# MASTER NARRATIVES CONTINUED

As a collective whole, these events solidified the field's new dominant master narrative: the narrative of emancipation. Fears that the field was on the cusp of disappearing were replaced by a critical mass of researchers striving to make clear the fact that, not only did behavioral dispositions exist in a coherent framework, these traits were also important, as they corresponded to a slew of relevant outcome variables. In short and in sum, the collective posture exhibited by personality psychologists transformed from defensive to offensive in nature.

## At the Bow: Master Narratives and Research in Future

Having now (however fleetingly) outlined the two dominant master narratives corresponding with personality psychologists over the proceeding 40 years, the reader may be justified in wondering what the *next* master narrative to overlay this substantive area may look like. From the current vantage point, it seems likely that one of at least two possible stories may come to preside. The first, narrative of stagnation, represents the outcome of staying the course in which personality and behavioral dispositions are, more often than not, equated, and efforts are placed most squarely on drawing connections between these dispositions and variables of various sorts. Evident from the title attributed to this approach, however, this author is of the mind that such a strategy will only work to limit innovation within the field.

A second, more attractive narrative consists of moving forward by first looking backwards, of affixing ourselves firmly at the bow while remaining ever aware of our stern. This would be most aptly done by revisiting the calls made by Carlson (1984) and others to put the *person* back in *personality* psychology. As McAdams (1997) contended, in personality psychologists' enthusiasm to settle the person-situation debate, these calls were largely ignored. Addressing them now requires embracing the holism of the person and a return to the grand theories of personality. As a discipline, we now have the methodological chops to make a real push regarding these ambitious theories. Once more, by doing so, we will no doubt increase the likelihood of propagating relevance and prosperity within and outside our field. Personality psychology occupies the pristine position from which to ask and answer big questions concerning the nature of personhood. Let's be sure to embrace the boldness of our forefathers and adopt the master narrative that allows us to make this happen.

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**Do you have a comment on this piece? Does personality and social psychology need a master narrative? Do we already have one?**

**Head over to the discussion board on the SPSP Student portion of the website to discuss these issues! Click [here](#).**

# DEAR (EXPERIMENTAL) PSYCHOLOGIST

**Dear (Experimental) Psychologist,**

**My boyfriend can't believe how much my grad student friends talk about research when we are together - even Friday at the bar! What can we talk about instead?**

**Sincerely,**

**Hobby-less grad student**

Dear Hobby-less,

We can totally relate –we didn't know what Gangnam style was until approx... three weeks ago. Don't despair, while you may not have hobbies or be knowledgeable about pop culture, after reading this you will know at least two ways to get the conversation going without making reference to your citation manager.

First, become a great interviewer. Psychologists may be known for introspection, but you can liven up any conversation through strategic questioning. Pick a topic that has general appeal, such as food! Ask your conversation partner about their favorite meal or restaurant.

Second, you can still talk about research as long as you don't make it obvious. If you can relate your knowledge to other people's work or relationship concerns, just about everyone will be interested in hearing your thoughts. In other words, let your friends and family members think you are a genius advice giver. They don't have to know most of it comes from empirical articles!

**Dear (Experimental) Psychologist,**

**I am having a hard time relating to the other students in my cohort - especially those that are looking to do clinical work. What can I do to spark conversation that we will all enjoy?**

**Sincerely,**

**Avoiding therapy**

Dear Therapy,

The more varied a department is in its degree offerings, it seems that communicating with your cohort becomes increasingly more difficult. This can be a frus-

trating experience for department gatherings when "cliques" of areas are quickly formed.

One thing that might be helpful in this situation is to talk about a class or topic area that you know everyone is familiar with.

Engage in a group nerd-out session about some new statistical procedure you learned last week, or commiserate about all of the homework you've been getting.

Of course you will want to break away from discussing coursework eventually, so use similar conversation tactics that you employ with your non-psychology friends. Talk about sports, celebrity news, or hobbies.

Finally, acknowledge that the topic of psychology will inevitably re-emerge, so make an effort to understand what their goals are and how they plan on using research to inform their practice. Maybe even foster a collaboration!

BY ASHLEY WHILLANS  
& JILL BROWN



## YOUR 2012-2013 GSC ~ OVER AND OUT



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