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**A Brief Response**

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How wonderful! We all write for a multitude of reasons, chief among them is the desire for a competent response. I got exactly that, and I am grateful for this lively dialog. Let me briefly comment to my responders in alphabetical order.

My good friend Jere Brophy wisely says we should not think of participation in policy debates as an obligation of all educational psychologists. I would agree, given the way things are now. But I would propose that we rethink the training of educational psychologists so that many of our newly minted doctorates come to see their participation as public intellectuals as an obligation. Lawyers do not have to do pro bono service, but many do because they see it as an obligation. Physicians don’t all join Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) and risk their lives in war zones, or take a month off each year to work in overseas clinics for room and board, but many do because they see it as their obligation. My concern is that we do not train educational psychologists with the same sense of having a public trust that some attorneys and physicians have. It is not that these two professions are always successful in communicating the obligations of their profession. Clearly the behavior of many lawyers and physicians is not affected by exhortations that public obligations accompany their positions. But they are successful in affecting some members of their profession. We do none of that, and I think we should. Even a little increase in the rate at which educational psychologists take on the role of public intellectuals would please me.

Jere also rightly points out that scientists too often lose control of their arguments when the media gets involved. I know that, all too well. But that is no excuse for not trying. And he points out that professions often engage in turf battles that do not ennoble them. Again I say, so what? That life is imperfect is no excuse not be engaged.

Jere also notes that social scientists too often see the complexity of the world and thus are of little use to politicians who seek the simplest of solutions. But if we had a history of being useful, even by pointing out the complexity of the world, we might save our government from embarrassment. Some of us, perhaps the conservative, Republican members of our brethren, might have found themselves at the table when the recent No Child Left Behind laws were passed. Republican as well as Democratic educational psychologists know that 100 percent of all children cannot reach some predetermined high level of performance. That is a fantasy. It denies individual differences in ability and in rate of learning, cornerstones of our discipline. The new laws will result in cheating, or a reduction of the scores needed to show high levels of performance (turning these tests into minimum competency tests eventually), or the classifying of many more children as "special education" and "language minority" so that testing accommodations can be given, or the retaining many more children in grade, and so forth. Perhaps our brethren at the table could have pointed out that as many as 80,000 schools will be labeled as "failing," and the public doesn’t believe that is true, so the federal government will ultimately lose face. Perhaps they could also have pointed out that the growth rates schools need to achieve the goal of "improved performance" cannot be sustained, and that under normal conditions many schools may require decades of constantly rising scores to achieve what they have been asked to achieve. It is entirely possible that had they been at the table, they would have been ignored. But I would have felt better if we had a profession that sometimes was invited to be at the table. Some of us could have helped the government do better.

My esteemed colleague Asa Hilliard was very kind to me. We have a mutual admiration society going back many years. He embeds his comments about schooling and our profession in the political and (especially) the economic context in which our work takes place. He astutely asks how it is that people with a history of involvement in attempting to destroy the public schools, who have promoted racist ideologies, end up embracing the No Child Left Behind Act? A paragraph ago, I used that legislation as a way of pointing out how we might have helped the government, as knowledgeable and patriotic professionals ought to do. But Asa raises the much bigger question of whether we might then be working for the enemy. Would we become technocrats aiding the forces of darkness to destroy public education if we actually had been at that table?

Asa asks a question that is at the heart of my concern--why are we not more politically astute as professional educational psychologists? Would large numbers of us, if asked, join the crusade to privatize the public schools and abandon the poor? Should we care about that as a profession, or is picking and choosing sides simply an individuals’ right? To answer that, I am sure that it is an individual choice to work for whatever educational goals make sense. But I am also sure that the profession has an obligation to explore these goals in the doctoral training programs of the next generation of educational psychologists.

There is little that can be done in education that is neutral, devoid of values and free of political repercussions. For example, current work on distributed intelligence and Vygotskian psychology challenges American notions of individuality and thus represents quite radical ideas for American pedagogy. By studying study skills and learning strategies we often seem to end up arguing that deficiencies in learning may be inherited in a way, but that you get them from your parents' environment, not from your parents' genes, thus attacking beliefs about the genetic basis for academic achievement. When we explore making meaning through analysis of literature, we may actually be engaging in the pedagogy promoted by Paolo Freire, teaching people to read the word in order to read the world, a form of liberation pedagogy. And the more we educational psychologists question the validity of high-stakes testing, the less likely the nation will be able to maintain a permanent underclass. Thus many of the current topics of educational psychology are politically loaded! Yet as far as I know there is not one single doctoral course called something like "Learning and Social Policy," or "Educational Psychology and Social Policy," where these kinds of issues can be explored.

Asa’s criticisms of Success for All is why we need a policy-oriented educational psychology course in doctoral training. He raises issues about this and similar programs that do not ordinarily get raised in research methods or learning courses. To do right by our students we need to help them explore the issues that he raised, before they end up at mid-career wondering what happened to them and their work. Asa reminds us all that the political and economic milieu in which we live and work strongly shapes the research we do and the pedagogies we associate with. Should we leave the gaining of this insight to chance, or find some way to help the educational psychologists of the future address these issues so they can deal with them in their own ways, as they eventually must?

Jeanne Ormrod makes the point that to change a culture is no easy task. She cites examples, both sad and funny, and I am sure we can all add to them. Her response helps me see that what I am advocating, above and in my paper, is a change in the culture of educational psychology. Jeanne promotes in a most straightforward fashion the quite radical notion that the areas we study and the research we do is potentially earth shattering. Our research has implications for educational decision-making that are quite powerful. I propose not only that we think about the model she offers us, a cognitive replacement model, but that we explicitly discuss these issues in the doctoral training of educational psychologists. Perhaps then we won't be such an invisible profession, a problem we have had for a long time and which she describes all too clearly. Perhaps if we were to think of learning, individual differences, and assessment courses not merely as the scientific center of our profession, but as the potential drivers of social policy, we would end up with a more engaged profession. That is the goal that Jeanne and I both share.

Jeanne provides four strategies for engaged educational psychologists to follow, and I agree with them all. We both want to see the talents of our profession brought to the public arena. We are not advocating any particular political or social agenda, but we both believe that an engaged profession has a much better chance of influencing the world in positive ways than one that keeps its talents hidden, often because of the mistaken belief that it is more scientifically respectable to stay above the fray.

Finally, my old and dear friend Virginia Richardson weighs in with her cautions. She says it well: the research must be good research. The researcher must strive for quality, rigor, fairness, and honesty in the conduct of the research and in its representation. Actually, the argument particular to partisan research she makes is irrelevant. The research should be high quality, rigorous, fair, etc. That’s it. That is all any researcher can do.

We are all partisan researchers, and it is a figment of the pre-modern world to believe otherwise. But admitting that as a researcher you are opinionated, or partisan, doesn’t have to make you dishonest as you do your work. Our leading institutions are filled with prestigious, partisan researchers. Despite the fact that "g" in intelligence stays with us, one of our most distinguished scientists and writers argues for multiple intelligences. Howard Gardner of Harvard does partisan research. His colleague at Harvard, Gary Orfield, does work on the pernicious effects of segregation. He also does partisan research. On the west coast, we find Jeannie Oakes at UCLA doing partisan research on the effects of tracking. And despite the fact that the public believes an immigrant must give up their heritage language to learn English, there are those like Kenji Hakuta of Stanford that design studies to challenge that belief. So the issue is not partisanship, it is the quality of the research. What Virginia failed to add, and of great importance, is that we need high quality criticism of research, particularly high quality reviewers for our journals. All research, but especially partisan research, deserves tough reviewing.

I quibble with Virgina on one point only and, even at the risk of sounding defensive, I will make my case. Virginia says, "The Berliner Laczko-Kerr study was designed to show that certified teachers do better by their students than uncertified teachers, including the TFA teachers." This is not quite how we would describe our motives. We would maintain that we kept our balance throughout the study, fully committed to releasing the data no matter which way the analyses came out. We designed the study to answer questions that were raised by many of the mentor teachers from the ASU college of education who kept telling us that uncertified teachers, particularly those from Teach for America, were "disasters." The study was based on the anecdotal reports of informants as well as a rich research literature. We wanted to provide an empirical test of the mentors’ opinions because we believed them to be true, and we believed that numerical data would be more persuasive to policy makers than were the anecdotal reports.

While we had our own beliefs, of course, it was not quite true that we went out to "prove" our beliefs. But even that shouldn’t matter, if what we did was honest. All the relevant data in our study were in the appendix to the journal article we published. Anonymous reviewers made many comments, which resulted in our rerunning the analyses to answer one of the many criticisms. In contrast, the CREDO report to which Virginia compares us was unavailable for public scrutiny and never published in a journal. Moreover, the comparison group used in that study was so faulty that it could not have been published in any quality journal. Passing the quality tests set out by highly qualified anonymous reviewers for a journal speaks loudly about the believability of partisan research. While our own research has many weak spots, and might not even hold up in a replication, it meets many more criteria for "good science" than does the CREDO report.

I might also add that Virginia is right in pointing out that the more important issue to study has to do with the retention of quality teachers. Recruitment issues wouldn’t be a problem if we understood how to keep teachers happy at their work. Finally, Virginia notes how the issues raised in this dialog have affected her own thinking about her own work. This is good, and the reason for dialog.

Let me end by saying how grateful I am that these four scholars took the time to respond to my first attempts at voicing these thoughts about our profession. I hope that more of us will weigh in as educational psychology enters its second century and attempts to influence educational practice.