

*Preface*¹

In 1992, the American Psychological Association (APA) published a wonderfully insightful, but not-so-small book entitled *Teaching Psychology in America: A History* (edited by Puente, Matthews, & Brewer). This volume provides a richly detailed and compelling account of the pedagogical progress in our field from the late 1800s through the early 1990s. It tells the historical story of the forces—the people, organizations, conferences, and publications—that shaped what we know today as the “teaching of psychology.”

Teaching of Psychology in Autobiography: Perspectives from Exemplary Psychology Teachers continues this story, albeit along more personal lines. It tells the individual stories of 53 people who have, in one way or another, been recognized for their contributions to the teaching of psychology over the past four decades. It chronicles their early development and maturation of teachers, offers insights to their personal philosophies of teachers, and offers their advice to those who wish to become effective teachers of psychology.

In determining who should contribute to this volume, we ultimately decided that our authors should be those who have achieved national recognition for their excellence in teaching and/or leadership in advancing the teaching of psychology. We invited recipients of all four of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) awards (Robert S. Daniel (Four-Year College or University) Award, Two-Year College Award, Moffet Memorial (High School) Award, and the McKeachie Early Career Award), all recipients of the American Psychological Foundation’s Teaching Excellence Award (now called the Charles L. Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award), past and present editors of *Teaching of Psychology*, and all past-presidents of STP to contribute chapters to this volume. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the result is the hefty volume you see before you.

To provide consistency in both content and style across all chapters, we asked each contributor to respond to the following 12 questions:

- What kind of preparation for teaching did you receive in your doctoral or master’s program? If you had a course on teaching, please describe it.
- Did you have a teaching mentor or mentors? If so, please describe any unique characteristics of that relationship.
- If you did not have any formal training in teaching or teaching mentors, please describe how you “taught yourself” to become an effective teacher.

¹ From T. A. Benson, C. Burke, A. Amstadter, R. Siney, V. Hevern, B. Beins, & W. Buskist, (Eds.), *Teaching psychology in autobiography: Perspectives from exemplary psychology teachers* (pp. vii-ix). Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Retrieved [insert date] from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Web site: <http://teachpsych.lemoyne.edu/teachpsych/tia/index.html>

- What factors may have led to your decision to become a college and university level teacher?
- Have you faced any obstacles in your teaching? If so, how have you attempted to overcome these obstacles in your own teaching? Please describe any issues with which you continue to struggle and how you attempt to deal with them.
- Many academics see their work as a zero sum game—for example, time spent in the lab is time that necessarily cannot be spent working on teaching and so on. Have you felt that you have to sacrifice your research, service, or outreach efforts in order to become an effective teacher. Why or why not?
- What principles rest at the heart of your personal philosophy of teaching?
- In what interesting and significant ways has your approach to teaching changed over your academic career?
- What sorts of things do you find most rewarding from your teaching? What are the greatest frustrations and how do you try to overcome them?
- What methods and processes do you use to evaluate and reflect on upon your teaching? How has your view of the role of assessment of teaching changed over the course of your teaching career?
- In what efforts do you engage to continue to improve your teaching? How frequently do you engage in these efforts?
- If someone wants to become a good or even outstanding teacher, what would you advise him or her to do?

As you will see when you read any chapter in this volume, the chapter authors organized their answers to these questions under the following headings:

- My Early Development as a Teacher
- Working at Defining Myself as a Teacher
- The Examined Life of a Teacher
- Advice for New Teachers
- Final Thoughts

We are grateful to our authors for the willingness to share with us—and with you—their personal stories as teachers of psychology. At every turn of the editorial process, they each responded to our comments, suggestions, and advice with enthusiasm, and in some cases, even with good humor. As you will see, though, for many of our contributors' success as teachers was often the result of overcoming personal difficulties and professional obstacles. None of the autobiographies contained in this volume show success as a teacher to be anything less than well-earned.

From T. A. Benson, C. Burke, A. Amstadter, R. Siney, V. Hevern, B. Beins, & W. Buskist, (Eds.), *Teaching psychology in autobiography: Perspectives from exemplary psychology teachers* (pp. vii-ix). Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Retrieved [insert date] from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Web site: <http://teachpsych.lemoyne.edu/teachpsych/tia/index.html>

We would also like to thank the STP leadership, particularly members of the Publications Board, for their support and encouragement of this book. Without such leadership, STP would not be the organization that it is today.

We hope that you enjoy reading the essays teaching as much as we have. We also hope that reading these essays will help you develop insights into your own personal journeys as teachers of psychology and that as a result, you will become a more effective teacher. After all, although we all seek perfection in our teaching, few of us ever achieve it, and when we do, it is only temporary.

Trish Benson

Carrie Burke

Ana Amstadter

Ryan Siney

Vinny Hevern

Barney Beins

Bill Buskist

October, 2005

Reference

Puente, A. E., Matthews, J. R., & Brewer, C. L. (1992). *Teaching psychology in America: A History*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.