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BRIEF RESEARCH REPORT

Educational Psychology: The Next Generation II

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One hundred educational psychology Master's and doctoral students in the New York State region were surveyed in an attempt to answer questions about their career goals and objectives. This paper reports the data obtained which may be useful for career guidance, the study of the profession, and the definition of educational psychology. Among the findings are that both levels of students intend to devote greater than half of their time engaged in academic work such as research, teaching, and writing. Additionally, of the many specialty areas in the field, the most popular were cognition and learning, learning strategies, educating special populations, individual differences, and motivation and efficacy. It was surprising that topics of modern importance, such as computed-aided instruction and instructional technology, were not very popular. © 1995 Academic Press, Inc.

In beginning her article, Jones (1985) suggested that, "at no time in American history have there been so many potential job opportunities for educational psychologists." This must have been a comforting assertion for current students then enrolled in educational psychology programs. Most surely by now most, if not all, have graduated and found those jobs. Jones and many other educational psychologists have written about the current and future directions of the field of educational psychology and job prospects for graduates (See also Wineberg and McGraw, 1987). Indeed, there have been a few surveys of graduates. Wineberg and McGraw (1987) discovered that while a majority of Stanford's doctoral educational psychology graduates were employed in academic and research settings, nearly a third worked in business or industry, regional educational laboratories and development centers, school districts, and in the military in training capacities. Houtz, Alford, and Komura (1992) found that nearly

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25% of the graduates of Fordham University's doctoral program in educational psychology were engaged in licensed private practice, largely as private learning consultants. Nearly 50% worked in schools, mental health settings, or in business and industry.

The point made by educational psychologists studying the prospects for their own field is that changes in both society and in the skills and interests of educational psychologists have made them more employable in a wider variety of settings and positions than traditional college and university teaching. These settings include public and private schools, hospitals and mental health facilities, community agencies, in military training, and in training and development activities for business and industry. Tobias' (1985) description of a "wellness" model for education stresses the role educational psychologists may play in "preventive" and "sustaining" types of educational human services. This view certainly seems consistent with society's growing realization of the importance of prevention in any realistic reform of the nation's health care system.

Despite the leadership offered by educational psychologists in their writings, a question remains whether current students share these optimistic views. In New York State, for example, a recent "official" view of the field proposed by the Regents of the State of New York for the purpose of a statewide evaluation of doctoral education was not so positive. The official definition of the field as simply "psychology applied to education" did not appear to recognize a wider applicability of educational psychological skills to other-than-traditional settings (Regents of the State of New York, 1990). In point of fact, other writers have criticized educational psychologists for their lack of attention to traditional educational issues. Developing job opportunities for educational psychologists in new areas also may have led to lessened interest in older areas.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to assess the perceptions of current students in educational psychology programs in New York State. Current students form the next generation of educational psychologists. When they graduate and find jobs, they will begin to define (or redefine) the field. What do they think about their own profession, their job prospects, the types of settings in which they will work, and the kinds of work they think they actually will engage in. Data concerning current students can be as useful for career guidance and the study of a profession, itself, as is information about graduates. New York State has a number of Master's and doctoral programs in educational psychology and, despite its position as a major northeastern industrial state, its overall economy and cultural diversity share quite a number of common factors with other parts of the country. Data from students currently enrolled in educational psychology programs in New York may be of interest and use to other schools, their students, and their professors.