

# Scott Monroe: Incoming SRP President

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Scott Monroe, the incoming president of the Society for Research in Psychopathology (SRP), did his undergraduate studies in math and psychology and strongly considered pursuing a career in clinical practice. Fortunately for SRP and the field of psychology, Scott chose a career in research, examining the role that life stress plays in the onset and recurrence of depressive disorders. With recent developments in genetic studies, Scott believes that significant advancements are possible in uncovering the etiology, mechanisms, and pathways underlying depression. Furthermore, he hopes that future research on major depression will inform our understanding of the links and boundaries between normal psychological functioning and psychopathology.

Scott became a member of SRP approximately fifteen years ago after receiving an invitation to join as an effort to expand the scope of research represented at SRP. Scott recalls that one of his main reasons for joining SRP was the “wonderful blend of high-level clinical science and nice people.” Scott humorously admits he was “somewhat of a hermit” and was uninterested in attending conferences in general. However, at his first SRP meeting, Scott dis-

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closed that he “actually learned something” from both the formal talks and symposiums, as well as through casual conversations with colleagues and students. Scott believes that SRP is a “great way to meet people” and “brainstorm and collaborate on actual research projects.” As president elect, Scott’s primary goals for the upcoming year are to target another “top flight” program and continue to have the annual meeting be a “real draw” for both members and students aspiring to produce substantial, and innovative research.

Under Scott’s leadership and valuable research experience, SRP will no doubt continue to grow and attract the high level of research that initially attracted him to this organization. Hopefully his responsibilities as president will not prevent him from doing the other activities he enjoys, including traveling, playing tennis and basketball, backpacking, and spending time with his family. As a final word of advice to those students entering the field of psychology, Scott encourages you to “find something you love and think is important,” and to “find passion in an area in which you can make a serious dent.”

# Keith Nuechterlein: Outgoing President

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Cognition is widely accepted as a core feature of schizophrenia. Deficits in cognition predict and likely contribute to functional outcome, and appear to be a viable target for psychological intervention. Dr. Keith Nuechterlein, outgoing SRP President, argued compellingly during his Presidential Address, “Cognition in Schizophrenia: Translational Research and Beyond,” that successfully intervening at the level of cognition is a reality on the horizon. The secret to this success, Dr. Nuechterlein believes, might require the development of new research paradigms. Dr. Nuechterlein proposes the prospect of “translational research” as a future solution, consistent with the goals of the National Institutes of Mental Health. Developing collaborative partnerships that engender much needed cross talk between basic behavioral science researchers and clinical scientists may lie at the heart of such endeavors. This method, says Dr.

Nuechterlein, would foster the development of sophisticated clinical research paradigms to allow for the investigation of the fundamental role of cognition in functional outcome and changes in cognition across the phases of psychotic illness.

I caught up with Dr. Nuechterlein after his Presidential Address to learn more about his thoughts on this and other topics. Dr. Nuechterlein elaborated on his views regarding cognition and schizophrenia, emphasizing the importance of “the partitioning of basic processing, borrowing from basic cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience,” and “collaborations with basic science researchers.” He cautioned, however, that it is imperative to “remember why” we follow these steps, as this will then allow us to “know where to intervene”.

With respect to his year as president of SRP, given the limited time frame afforded by the annual conference,

Dr. Nuechterlein reported that the Society “struggled with increasing the number of symposium that brought key issues to the floor, and depth into topics.” “Fortunately,” he stated, the “number and diversity of topics [this year] gave continuity.” Dr. Nuechterlein is proud of this year’s talks and symposia, and with regard to the balance between the breadth and depth of symposia, he reported warmly, “I think we got it.”

Dr. Nuechterlein, a key figure in both the Society and also the ever-changing field of experimental psychopathology, is not only a passionate leader and scientist, but also a highly committed mentor of students. According to Dr. Nuechterlein, what he enjoys most about working with students is their “newness” and “enthusiasm.” “Students,” says Dr. Nuechterlein, “know concepts from other fields that you can’t keep up with because you have specialized.” Students, he says, “ask you questions that you stopped asking yourself.” For example, a student might ask, “Why are you pursuing that line of research?” a core question at the heart of everything he does, but a question he doesn’t reflect on frequently. He humbly reported that when

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working with students, he values those moments when he finds himself saying, “Oops, I hadn’t thought of that.” In offering guidance to students entering the field, Dr. Nuechterlein encourages students to “realize that if you want to make a contribution...ask yourself, what will pique someone’s interest? What interesting twist will be different from my mentor’s research...think carefully about those steps.” In line with this, he stressed the importance of “carefully deciding on your dissertation project.”

To move the field forward, reflecting on his first year as a graduate student, Dr. Nuechterlein recounts a lesson from Paul Meehl, when Meehl said to him “I know that you’re now worried that you can’t master everything in clinical psychology, but not only do you have to master clinical psychology, you have to think more broadly, and master integration from different fields.” This, Meehl implored, “moves us forward.” Consistent with his Presidential Address, not only will cross-field integration move the field forward, but, as Dr. Nuechterlein passionately stated, these scientific collaborations will enhance the identification of appropriate intervention targets.

## Dr. Bob Krueger: Member

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Bob Krueger obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and is currently Professor of Clinical Psychology, and Personality, Individual Differences, and Behavior Genetics in the Department of Psychology at the University of Minnesota. Just over a decade after obtaining his Ph.D., Bob has already had an illustrious career. A PsychINFO search yields close to 100 published works. Additionally, Bob received a Theodore Millon Mid-Career Award from the American Psychological Foundation, an American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology, and an Early Career Award from the International Society for the Study of Individual Differences, to name just a few his many awards and honors.

I reached Bob in his office at the University of Minnesota in the early afternoon and after some small talk, we got down to business. Bob’s research focuses on the close link between common forms of psychopathology and personality. The major question on which much of his work has been and is currently focused is how to best con-

tinue to refine the joint system of personality and psychopathology. “We need to understand the phenotype in order to best understand the etiology and genotypic relations,” Bob told me. Along these lines, he is also currently pursuing research related to molecular genetics. This program of research, as well as the research being done in other laboratories by other investigators, promises to influence DSM-V. When asked about the major shifts that he sees in the field and how they relate to DSM-V, Bob responded that since he is involved in DSM-V, he has been lucky enough to participate in various meetings and discussions. He reported being optimistic that there will be change as we now know that the nature of these phenotypes are continuous. Consistent with this, he expects that the upcoming DSM will not be solely categorical but that we will see dimensional augmentations across the manual.

In addition to being a prolific contributor to the research literature, Bob also plays an important role in training future psychologists. As a seasoned, albeit still quite young, academician, Bob’s interest and excitement

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in working with graduate students are refreshing. What he enjoys most about working with graduate students is watching them go from “raw material” to “developing a program of research that exemplifies [their] individual strengths.” For Bob, the most rewarding aspect of having established a career in academia is the autonomy. In academia, one has the freedom and ability to set one’s own agenda; a privilege that does not exist in most other fields. While rewarding, Bob reminded me that this also consti-

tutes a big responsibility. He feels that tenure is “a tremendous privilege” that academicians need to “take seriously.” With tenure, one is expected to set an agenda that not only has an impact on the field, but is also able to help people on the ground.

The interview ended with Bob’s advice to graduate students interested in entering academia. Bob recommended searching “yourself and finding out why you want to be an academic.” This will lead you to something that you are really passionate about, most likely a question you want to answer. “Since academia requires so much autonomy and self-direction and is often not very rewarding, you need focus and internal motivation to pursue questions in which you are truly interested. You need to have passion in the activities that people do as professors. In the absence of that, it is a very hard job to do.”

## Milton Strauss: Zubin Award Winner

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In 1987, The Society for Research in Psychopathology (SRP) began selecting prominent psychopathology researchers and acknowledging their contributions to the field with life-time achievement awards, later named in honor of Dr. Joseph Zubin. Over the years, this prestigious annual award has been granted to some of the most prominent and prolific researchers in our field; this year is no exception.

2007’s Zubin Award winner is Dr. Milton Strauss, currently at the University of New Mexico. Dr. Strauss, who serves as editor of *Psychological Assessment* and previously as editor of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, has enriched the field of psychopathology with his research on depression in Alzheimer disease and schizophrenia. Dr. Strauss’ career has also spanned the country, employed by such varied institutions as the University of Missouri, Wayne State University, Detroit’s Hutzel Hospital, Johns Hopkins University and School of Medicine, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, and Case Western Reserve University.

Dr. Strauss’ acceptance speech for the Zubin Award demonstrated his discerning editorial skills and high standards for research design and methodology. One of his incisive themes included the need for current investigators to become familiar with research done before 1967, a key year as studies published prior to this time are archived in Historical PsycInfo which is often not linked with current PsycInfo by libraries. In speaking one-on-one with Dr. Strauss, he pointed out that as a graduate student, Gordon Allport once gave him the same advice regarding older research, noting the importance of rereading the research of 30 years ago because the problems are the same, it is our

conceptual framework that keeps changing.

When asked about the most important contributions from his career, Dr. Strauss indicated that of all the work he has produced, he is most proud of his methodological work in schizophrenia, particularly on issues of differential deficit and contaminating variables. Receiving a life time achievement award from the Society has not signaled an end to his productivity, as Dr. Strauss is still very active in his professional pursuits. He continues to find new areas of interest in psychopathology, noting that “cognitive neuroscience of schizophrenia is really interesting.” He also stated that he would like to see more research on how behavior drives the brain in schizophrenia as opposed to correlational studies that examine differences between people with schizophrenia and healthy controls. He added that he sees value in “looking parametrically at changes in brain functioning with manipulated changes within experimental parameters that affect task performance.”

Dr. Strauss offered sage guidance for students entering the field of psychopathology research. He says that one of the most rewarding aspects of having established a career in academia is the ability to pursue whatever he wanted, certainly an appealing description of the field for any aspiring student. One of the most surprising things about research, he mused, is when he has turned out to be correct about an idea, since science is so often concerned with proving yourself wrong. Dr. Strauss closed his conversation with me by sharing his earnest belief that he has been blessed with many hard-working graduate students and that one of the best parts of his job has been watching their enthusiasm.