

# Society for Cross-Cultural Research Newsletter

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## DELINQUENT DUES AND BAD ADDRESSES

SCCR has a serious problem with members who have not paid their 1999 dues, or have failed to respond to repeated warning that their e-mail addresses are not functioning. **This is the last newsletter that members who are not current in this dues payments will receive. It is also the last posted newsletter that members with e-mail addresses will receive.** You will be receiving your dues statement before the time to issue the Winter newsletter. Make sure that you pay your dues promptly.

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### A Message from President-Elect Harry Gardiner

The SCCR meeting will be at the Hampton Inn-Downtown in New Orleans, February 23-27, 2000. Abstracts for symposia and individual papers are beginning to appear in my email box but I would certainly like to see many more before the deadline near the end of October. We are looking forward to seeing old friends and acquaintances as well as many new people - please encourage your colleagues and graduate students and friends to join us for some good southern hospitality in a city where we have never met before. It should be fun!

In addition to traditional papers and symposia we are open to other ideas -roundtable discussions, in-depth discussions of important cultural issues, approaches, and controversies - we're ready for any and all ideas. Try us!

The meeting will begin, as usual, on Wednesday evening with registration and a reception. paper sessions will begin at 9:00 on Thursday morning and continue through Sunday morning. The banquet will be on Friday evening.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in New Orleans.

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## New Orleans 2000 Meeting

Submissions for the SCCR annual meeting in New Orleans, February 23-27, 2000 are slowly trickling in with an October 21st deadline on the horizon. If you have a paper, symposium, or special session planned please send your abstract (hard copy or e-mail) to Harry Gardiner at [gardiner@uwlax.edu](mailto:gardiner@uwlax.edu) as soon as you can. Late submissions makes getting the final program together much more difficult than it needs to be. Forms for doing this are attached to this newsletter.

Remember -- payment of registration fees is required before final acceptance of papers or symposia. Use the form attached to send your registration fees to Harry Gardiner at the address indicated.

**REFUND POLICY.** In the past, we have sometimes had problems with individuals being placed on the program and then not attending (for a variety of reasons). Determining refunds has been a difficult matter.

This year, the following policy is being instituted: If a paper is withdrawn by January 1, all meeting fees will be refunded except for a \$10 handling fee. Withdrawal by February 1 would get a 50% refund and after that date, no refund.

### CURRENT SUBMISSIONS - New Orleans Meeting

Listed below are some of the individual papers, symposia, and special sessions that have been received at the time the newsletter went to press.

Sandra Carpenter (U Alabama-Huntsville) Culture (Ethnicity) Differences in Perceptions of Group Homogeneity and Entitativity.

Anna Eisler (Stockholm U). Perception and Estimation of Time: A Cross-Cultural Comparison and Human Ecology and Behavior: Empirical Studies on Culture and Perceived Risk Factors.

Ron Rohner (U Conn). Parental Warmth, Control, and Involvement in Schooling: Predicting Academic Achievement Among Korean American Adolescents.

Jay Mutter (St. Mary's U of MN). Measuring Change in Cross-Cultural Sensitivity: Assessing the Success of an Undergraduate Semester Abroad Experience.

Harry Gardiner (U Wisconsin-La Crosse). The (Possible) Future of (Cross) Cultural Human Development.

Robert Weigl (The Franklin Psychotherapy Center). Symposium on The Masked Culture of the Cross-Culturalist.

Sue Weller, Jeff Johnson & Devon Brewer. Series of special sessions in honor of Kim Romney.

We'd like to add each of you to the program, so please get those forms, e-mails, and postcards into Harry Gardiner as soon as possible.



## **Obituary for John Wesley Mayhew Whiting**

**By Carol R. Ember**

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### [Harvard University Gazette obituary](#)

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John Whiting died peacefully on May 13, 1999 at the age of 91 on the land on which he was born. He had a strong attachment to Chilmark and Tisbury Great Pond in Martha's Vineyard where he grew up as a boy, spent most summers and holidays, and lived permanently with his wife and lifelong collaborator, Beatrice Blyth Whiting, after they retired from Harvard. Even though he was ill for the last several years, he got great satisfaction from looking out at the pond from the deck of the house they built to live and work in.

While his triumphs as a gardener or as a skillful collector of shellfish were important to him, there was no way to miss John's passion for academic research, particularly when he or a collaborator came up with a new and intriguing finding. His openness to new ideas and extensions of previous findings was one of his greatest strengths. Turning problems upside down or reversing causality was important to him intellectually. He was strongly committed to scientific hypothesis-testing research and he encouraged students to test ideas in all possible ways, from intra-cultural comparisons in this and other cultures to regional and worldwide comparisons. His own research used data from ethnographies when there was available information, but he and Beatrice both stressed that there were many times when it was necessary to collect new data from the field. For example, ethnographers are not particularly adept at describing children's behavior and social interaction, and so John proposed a study of 100 cultures, which, for funding considerations, became truncated to what became known as the Six Cultures project.

He attributed his interest in cross-cultural research to George Peter Murdock, his mentor and thesis advisor at Yale University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1938. His intellectual interests in infancy, childhood development and psychological defenses, however, stem more from the formative experiences he had at the interdisciplinary Institute of Human Relations established at Yale in the 1930s. There, before and after his dissertation research, he was exposed to rigorous hypothesis-testing, statistics, and experimental methods. Participants in the Institute were required to study disciplines other than their own, and that brought John into contact with learning theorists such as Clark Hull, Neal Miller, and Robert Sears. Psychoanalytic theory was acquired from John Dollard and most importantly and personally through his own analysis with Earl Zinn. Other influential instructors were Bronislaw Malinowski who stressed the importance of explaining culture in terms of the needs of individuals and Edward Sapir who stressed that the modal personality of a culture could be gleaned through magic, religion and art.

After obtaining his Ph.D., John stayed on at the Institute of Human Relations at Yale until the onset of World War II. Murdock persuaded the Navy to process data on the Micronesian Islands. So Murdock, Clellan S. Ford and John became Navy officers, worked on preparing handbooks on island life, and served on the first staff of military government on Okinawa. After the war, John returned to the Institute of Human Relations until he moved to the University of Iowa for two years to work with Robert Sears at the Child Welfare Research Station. In 1949 Sears was invited to move his whole staff to the Harvard Graduate School of Education to a new Laboratory of Human Development, located in an old frame

house (Palfrey House) in Cambridge. John became Director of the Laboratory in 1953, Professor of Education in 1955, and Charles Bigelow Professor of Education in 1960. In 1963 he became Professor of Social Anthropology in the interdisciplinary Department of Social Relations, a position which he held until his official retirement in 1978. Honors include an invitation to the Center for Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto (1956-7), the G. Stanley Hall Award for Distinguished Contributions to Developmental Psychology given by the American Psychological Association (1973), an invitation to give the Distinguished Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in the same year, an AAA Distinguished Service Award (1982), and an AAA Career Contribution Award (1989). He also served as the President of the Society for Psychological Anthropology in 1978 and was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1987.

John's fieldwork among the Kwoma in 1935-36 (published as *Becoming a Kwoma*, 1941) solidified his interest in learning theory, defense mechanisms, and personality effects on culture. Later, in a major cross-cultural study conducted with Irvin Child (*Child Training and Personality*, 1953), John more formally began to model and try to test a model which became known as personality integration of culture. The idea that personality processes help explain the connections between two aspects of culture. One aspect of culture consists of those institutions called "maintenance systems" (e.g., family, economy, political systems) that are adapted to ecological and environmental problems. The other aspect consists of "projective systems" (e.g., art, music, games, religion, beliefs about illness, initiation rites) presumably created by society to deal with defenses and anxieties induced by the demands of child training. For example, In *Child Training and Personality*, using data from a worldwide sample of ethnographies, Whiting and Child tested the idea that the child training emphases in a culture (e.g., severity of weaning) could create fixations that would influence cultural beliefs about the causes of illness and the therapies used for treating illness.

The personality integration of culture model was influential not only in his own research, but for scores of his students and colleagues working in the field of psychological anthropology. One particular area of focus was the effect of father-absence or low father-salience on cultural institutions and personality. Not content with just looking at the consequences of low father-salience, John also turned his attention to the possible causes of low father salience. These include the effects of climate on sleeping arrangements (husbands and wives tend to sleep together in cold climates), baby carrying (mother-infant body contact is high in tropical areas), the long post-partum sex taboo (postulated as a device to space births in tropical areas with low protein in the diet), and polygyny.

John was a principal in a number of comparative fieldwork projects: the Six Cultures project, in which comparative data on children's socialization and behavior was collected in six settings by a female and male research team, the Child Development Research Unit in Africa, which collected basic community data on 13 communities in Kenya and involved Kenyans as collaborators in the research enterprise, and a comparative study of adolescence.

John rejected authoritarianism; he believed in and practiced working as a partner with colleagues and students. The atmosphere at Palfrey House epitomized this intellectual spirit: anyone, regardless of status, could make a theoretical or methodological proposal, brainstorming was the order of the day, and the ultimate test of any idea was whether it worked, i.e., predicted the way it should.

John served as a mentor to an extraordinarily large number of students and colleagues. While we might mourn his death, John as a practical man would undoubtedly urge us to get on with the search for new

discoveries with which we can tantalize the next generation of scientists. If he could, he would probably put up a strenuous argument about how we had gotten it all wrong, just to make us think harder. We are now going to have to do that without him.

References: A complete bibliography of John W. M. Whiting's work and an autobiographical statement can be found in *Culture and Human Development: The Selected Papers of John Whiting*, Eleanor Hollenberg Chasdi, ed. Cambridge University Press, 1994.



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