

Thesis and Dissertation Awards

Each year, the University of North Texas's College of Education reviews the past year's best theses and dissertations and awards two top honors. This year the dissertation award went to Dr. Peggy Ceballos (Ph.D. '08), a graduate of the [Counseling and Higher Education](#) (CHE) program. Her major professor was Dr. Sue Bratton. The thesis award went to Brian White (MS '08), a graduate of the [Kinesiology, Health Promotion and Recreation](#) (KHPR) program whose major professor was Dr. Simon Driver.

It was not until Dr. Ceballos transferred to UNT that she learned about Child-Parent Relationship Therapy (CPRT). "Learning about this program from Dr. Bratton and Dr. Landreth was like finding the piece of the puzzle that I was missing. I loved the idea of a parenting program that focused on positively impacting the parent-child relationship, thus, eliciting long-lasting changes instead of short-term solutions," says Dr. Ceballos.

Being from Venezuela, Dr. Ceballos had a personal desire to work with Latino parents and children. While at UNT, she joined Dr. Bratton's on-going research in schools and concentrated on serving the Spanish speaking population in Denton. She experienced first-hand the great need that exists to render mental health services to Latino children. As a result, she decided to investigate the effects of CPRT with first generation Latino immigrant parents and their children who were identified at-risk for academic achievement. "I strongly believe that empowering parents to make a difference in their children's lives is one of the most wonderful and rewarding experiences I can have as a counselor," says Peggy.

Brian White considered resilience in relation to people with traumatic injuries. "I suggested the thesis research to Dr. Driver and he supported me in proposing the idea to the Research Director of Baylor Hospital, Dr. Ann-Marie Warren. The hospital and the university both approved the research to their respective Institutional Review Boards," says Brian. Resilience is considered part of the "positive psychology" movement that focuses on identifying individual strengths when faced with adversity rather than on weaknesses or pathology. Brian's review of resilience literature, as well as identifying new research directions, was published in *Rehabilitation Psychology*, Vol. 53(1), February 2008, 9-17.

His thesis, [Identifying Changes in Resilience During Rehabilitation from a Spinal Cord Injury](#), indicated that there were "significant changes in depression, satisfaction with life, spirituality and functional independence during inpatient rehabilitation." Findings also indicated "significant correlations between resilience, satisfaction with life, spirituality, and depression." This work has also been accepted for publication in *Rehabilitation Psychology*.